

STARBLAZER

FANTASY FICTION IN PICTURES No. 230

30p



A PLAGUE OF HORSEMEN

We at "Starblazer" want to bring you the very best in Fantasy Fiction. To do that we need *your* help.

So that we can produce the kind of stories you want to read, please fill in the questionnaire on this page and send it to "Starblazer", D. C. Thomson & Co. Ltd., 185 Fleet Street, London EC4A 2HS.

If you don't want to cut your issue of "Starblazer", you can copy the questionnaire onto a sheet of paper.

And there's a chance to win a full-colour print of one of our new-style wraparound covers!

The senders of the ten letters which we judge to be the most informative will each receive one of the prints. We want to hear from you NOW!

Name **Age**

Address

What kind of science fiction do you most enjoy?

Please tick

appropriate boxes.

If you dislike any type of story, place a cross in the box.

SUPERHEROES	<input type="checkbox"/>	FANTASY
DUNGEONS	<input type="checkbox"/>	SWORD AND
AND DRAGONS	<input type="checkbox"/>	SORCERY
POST	<input type="checkbox"/>	HORROR
HOLOCAUST	<input type="checkbox"/>	STAR WARS
ADVENTURE	<input type="checkbox"/>	DR. WHO
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Where do you normally buy your STARBLAZER? _____

Which is your favourite STARBLAZER story? _____

Which is your favourite character? _____

Which is your favourite science fiction movie? _____

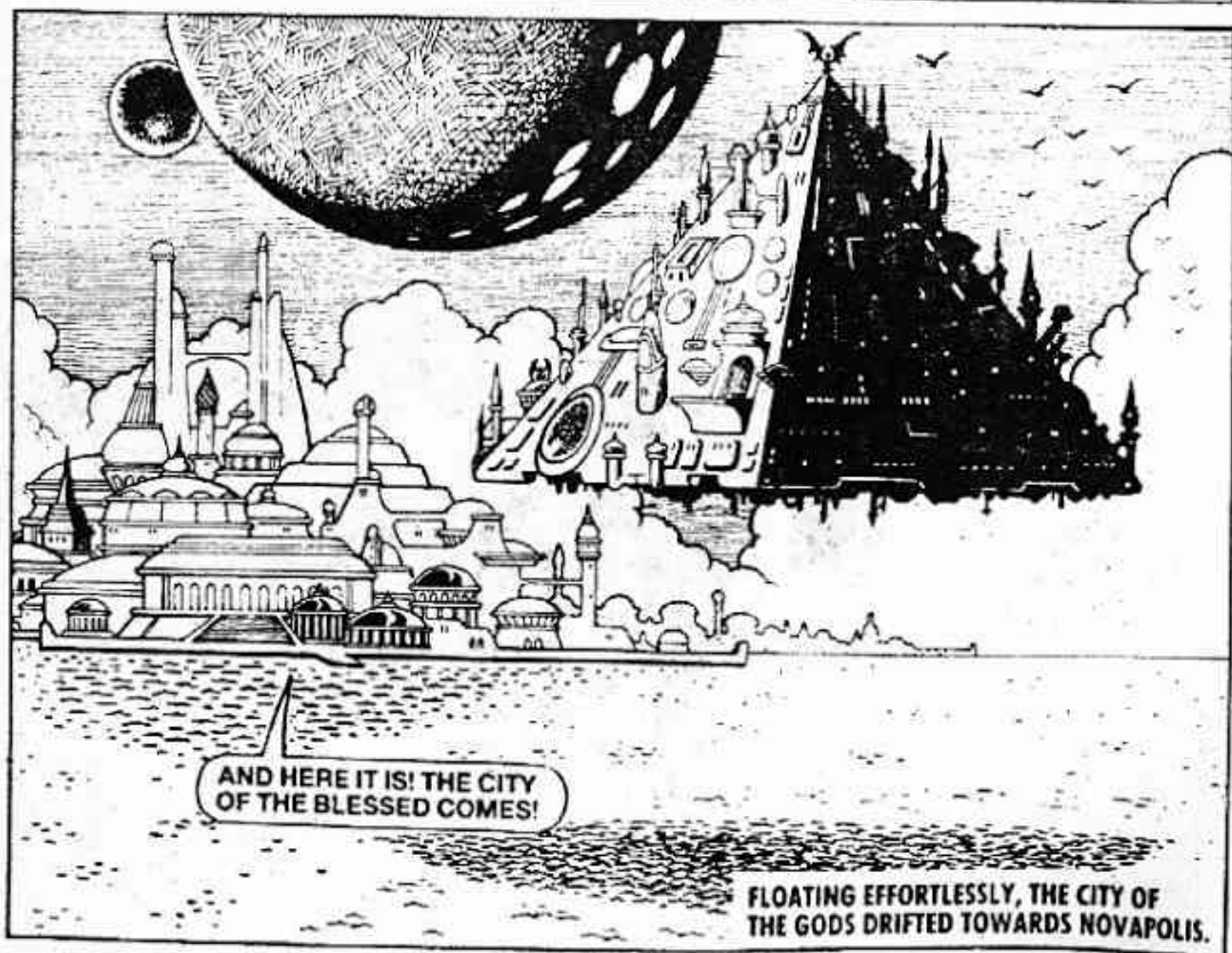
Have you any comments to make about STARBLAZER... good or bad? _____

A PLAGUE OF HORSEMEN

THE GOLDEN AGE HAD COME AT LAST. MANKIND WAS AT PEACE AND DWELT IN MANY A SPLENDID CITY. BUT NONE WAS MORE BEAUTIFUL NOR MARVELLOUS THAN NOVAPOLIS — THE CITY ON THE OCEAN.

THIS IS A GREAT DAY FOR YOU, PRINCE SELIN. THE GODS THEMSELVES COME TO DWELL IN NOVAPOLIS.

A GREAT DAY FOR US ALL, EDRIC. BUT THE CITY OF THE BLESSED WILL ACTUALLY HANG OVER. NOVAPOLIS. REMEMBER, ONLY THE LORD SAMAROBRYN, RULER OF THE SORCEROUS UNIVERSE, WILL ACTUALLY LIVE AMONG US.



AND THEN, THE CROWDED PIAZZA WAS FILLED WITH THE BLAZING PRESENCES OF THE SEVEN GODS.

BEHOLD, MY LORD PRINCE — YOUR GODS COME.

THAT I SHOULD LIVE TO SEE THIS DAY!

AS AMARANTH, BROTHER-IN-LAW TO SAMAROBRYN, I WELCOME HIM IN YOUR NAME AND CROWN HIM MASTER OF THE NEW WORLD!

THE CROWD FELL SILENT, AND A FAINT HUM ROSE IN VOLUME AS THE GODS FED POWER INTO THE GOLD CORONET IN AMARANTH'S HANDS.


SUDDENLY, A GOLDEN-EYED BEING OF MORE THAN HUMAN BEAUTY SAT UPON THE THRONE OF THE WORLD — SAMAROBRYN, A DOG INCARNATED IN HUMAN FORM.



A black and white comic panel showing a dramatic moment. On the left, a figure in a tall, conical hat and a robe with a large, stylized 'A' on the back is shown from the chest up, reaching out. On the right, a man with a crown and a patterned robe is being struck or held by the first figure. The background features jagged, lightning-like lines.

... KING OF THE DEAD!

WITH A LIGHTNING THRUST, AMARANTH STRUCK SAMAROBRYN DOWN. THE PEOPLE OF NOVAPOLIS COULD ONLY LOOK ON IN HORROR.

A black and white comic panel showing a man in a long, patterned robe and a crown standing on a raised platform, holding a sword aloft in his right hand and the crown in his left. He is addressing a group of people. In the background, several figures in robes are seated. In the foreground, a man in a crown is seated on a throne, looking up at the speaker. Other people are visible in the foreground, looking towards the speaker.

AMARANTH! YOU MADMAN! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

CLAIMED MY OWN, MORTAL PRINCE! DO YOU THINK I WORKED SO HARD FOR THIS DAY JUST TO LET MY SISTER'S MILK-SOP HUSBAND TAKE THE CROWN? NOW THE POWER IS MINE ALONE! I AM MASTER OF YOU ALL!

BUT EVEN AS AMARANTH SPOKE, ONE OF THE GODS. BLAZING WITH VENGEFUL ANGER, LOOMED ABOVE HIM.



NOT SO, TREACHEROUS AMARANTH! SAMAROBRYN HELD ONLY WHAT THOSE WHO LOVED HIM WERE PREPARED TO GIVE. NEITHER THIS WORLD NOR ANY OTHER IN THE UNIVERSE WILL BE YOURS TO RULE.

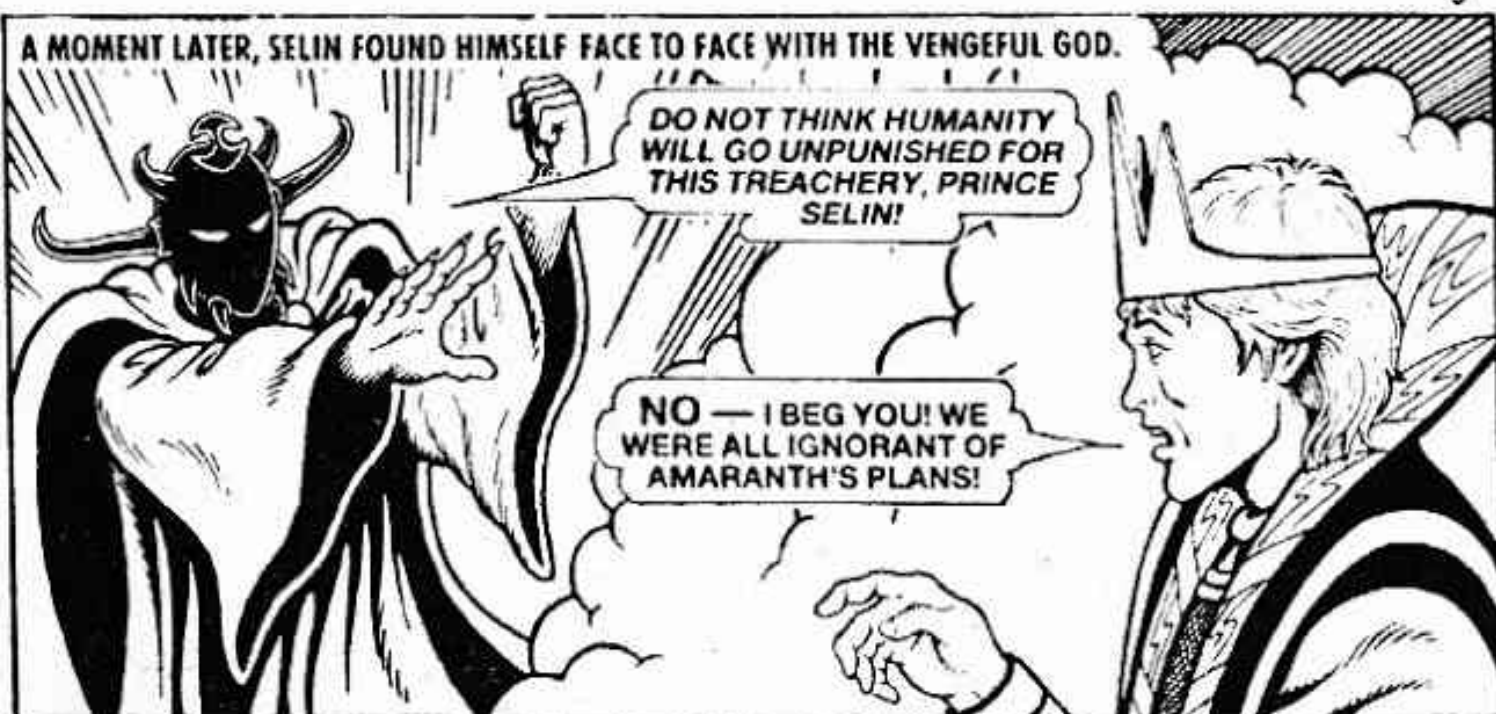


FROM THIS MOMENT ON, AMARANTH, YOU ARE EXILED TO LIMBO — TO ENJOY FOR ETERNITY THE TERRORS OF TOTAL NON-EXISTENCE!



AMARANTH WAS HURLED THROUGH THE FABRIC OF THE UNIVERSE INTO LIMBO — THE TIMELESS NOTHINGNESS BEYOND REALITY.

A MOMENT LATER, SELIN FOUND HIMSELF FACE TO FACE WITH THE VENGEFUL GOD.



DO NOT THINK HUMANITY
WILL GO UNPUNISHED FOR
THIS TREACHERY, PRINCE
SELIN!

NO — I BEG YOU! WE
WERE ALL IGNORANT OF
AMARANTH'S PLANS!



IGNORANCE IS NO EXCUSE! LET
THE FOUR HORSEMEN BE OUR
MESSENGERS OF VENGEANCE!

GALLOPING IMAGES FILLED THE AIR
WITH A GHOSTLY THUMMING OF HOOVES.



THE GOD STREAKED UP TO THEIR CITY, AND A MOMENT LATER AN EXPLOSION SHOWERED NOVAPOLIS WITH A DEADLY RAIN OF DEBRIS.



SURVIVORS CLAMBERED FROM THE RUINS—

LEGEND LONG FORETOLD THE COMING OF THE HORSEMEN, EDRIC. IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD.



THE FOUR HORSEMEN
SWIFTLY COVERED THE
GLOBE WITH THEIR
DIFFERENT, DEADLY GIFTS.

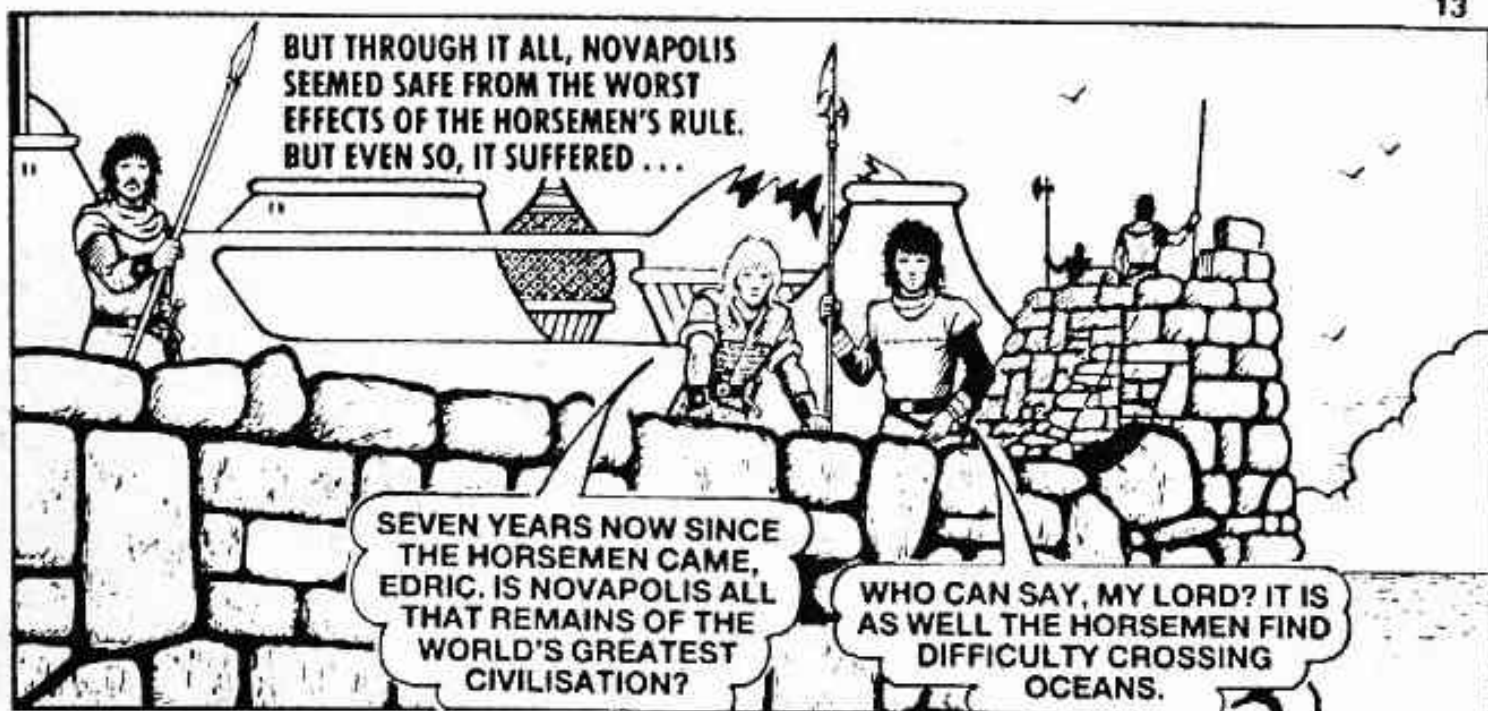


PLAGUE BROUGHT
MADNESS AND LINGERING
DEATH FROM A HUNDRED
DISEASES ...

PESTILENCE STRUCK THE FRUIT
STILL ON THE BOUGH, THE
RIPENING GRAIN IN THE FIELD,
LEAVING ONLY STARVATION ...







EVEN AS THEY SPOKE —





AND THEN THE AIR WAS FULL OF FEROCIOUS WINGED CREATURES — DRIVING THE AMPHIBIAN INVADERS BACK TO THE SEA.



BY THE SEVEN GODS — WE'RE SAVED!

AYE — BUT BY WHAT?

WITHIN MOMENTS, THE RETREAT BECAME A ROUT, AND THE AMPHIBIAN CREATURES FLED BACK TO THE SAFETY OF THE OCEAN.



IT SEEMS WE HAVE ALLIES, EDRIC. BUT I THOUGHT THAT SINCE THE DEATH OF SAMOROBRYN, NO ONE HAD THE POWER OF MAGIC.

THEN YOU THOUGHT WRONG, MY LORD PRINCE.

THE COLD, EMOTIONLESS VOICE CUT THROUGH SELIN'S MUSINGS.

I AM MICHIN OF EFILON, AND I COMMAND A MODEST PROPORTION OF THE SKILL YOU CALLED MAGIC. TAIPO HERE AND MYSELF WILL HELP YOU FREE THE WORLD OF THE HORSEMEN'S BANE.



AS THE NEWCOMER SPOKE, THE CREATURE HE CALLED TAIPO FLUTTERED AROUND HIS HEAD, EYES GLITTERING MALICIOUSLY.

OH, YES? HOW CAN WE BE SURE YOU'RE NOT ONE OF THE HORSEMEN'S CREATURES? AND HOW DID YOU GET TO NOVAPOLIS?




YOU KNOW BETTER THAN THAT, EDRIC. THE HORSEMEN COMMAND ELEMENTAL FORCES, NOT MEN. AS TO HOW I CAME HERE — LET THAT BE A SAMPLE OF MY ABILITIES.



BUT I AM NOT ALL POWERFUL. TO DEFEAT THE FOUR HORSEMEN WE MUST FIND THE PYRAMID OF POWER — THE SOURCE OF THEIR OWN MAGIC. I CAN TURN THAT MAGIC AGAINST THEM. I NEED YOUR HELP, PRINCE SELIN — AN ARMY TO PROTECT ME, SO THAT I MAY SAVE US ALL.

YOU WISH A BARGAIN THEN, MICHIN OF ELIFON? BUT WHY SHOULD WE NOT STAY IN NOVAPOLIS?



NOVAPOLIS CAN SURVIVE FOR ONLY A WHILE LONGER. ALREADY THE HORSEMEN TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO THE OCEANS. SAFE FROM PLAGUE AND PESTILENCE YOU MAY BE, BUT THE THREAT OF WAR AND SAVAGE BEASTS IS REAL ENOUGH.

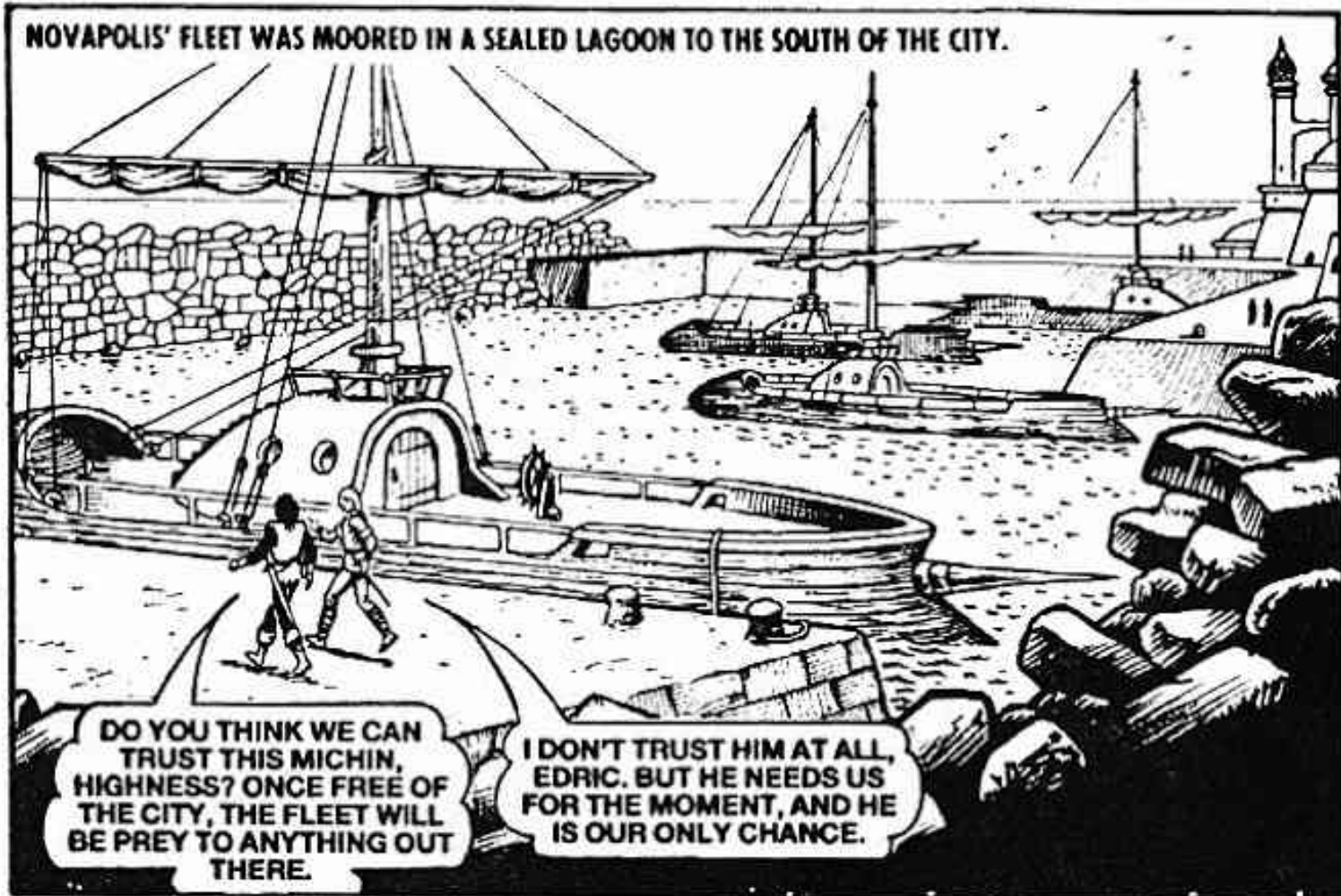
SELIN NODDED, THINKING OF THE INCREASED ATTACKS BY THINGS FROM THE SEA.



VERY WELL, WE WILL HELP YOU IN THIS QUEST, MAGICIAN MICHI. BUT THE SEVEN GODS HELP YOU IF YOU PLAN TREACHERY.

THE GODS HAVE DESERTED US, LORD PRINCE. BUT BE ASSURED I HAVE NO REASON TO HARM YOU.

NOVAPOLIS' FLEET WAS MOORED IN A SEALED LAGOON TO THE SOUTH OF THE CITY.



FINALLY, THE DAY TO SAIL DAWNED. SELIN ASSEMBLED OFFICERS ON THE FLEET ON BOARD HIS OWN SHIP, THE TRADEWIND.

YOU ALL KNOW THE REASON FOR THIS VOYAGE. I CANNOT COMMAND YOU TO FOLLOW ME TO WHAT MAY BE AN EVEN QUICKER, SURER DEATH ...



SO I ASK YOU — ALL OR NOTHING! A LIFE OF FREEDOM, OR DEATH UNDER THE HORSEMEN! WHAT DO YOU SAY, LADS?



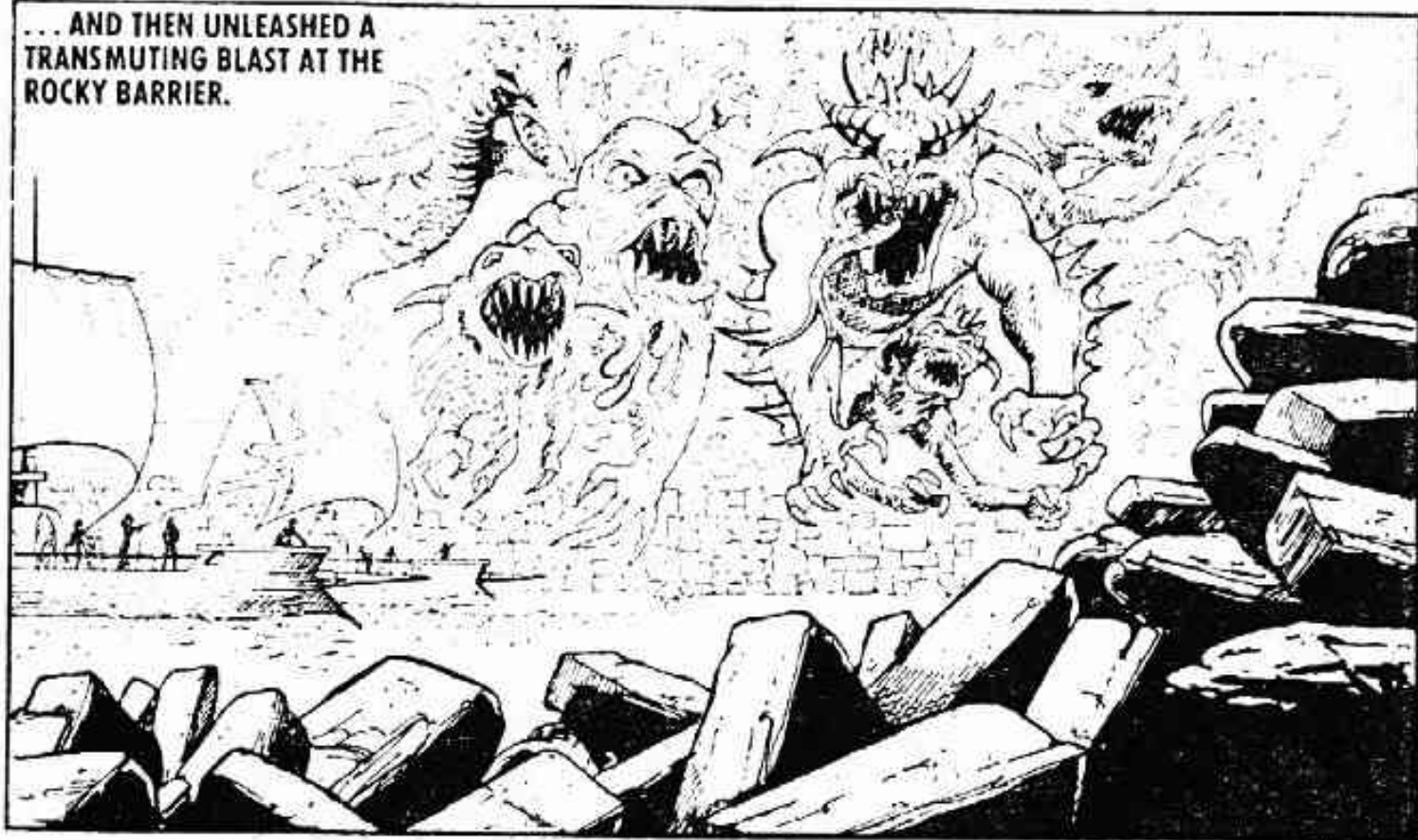
WE GO WITH YOU!

RETURNING TO THEIR SHIPS, ALL CREWS BEGAN TO CAST OFF.

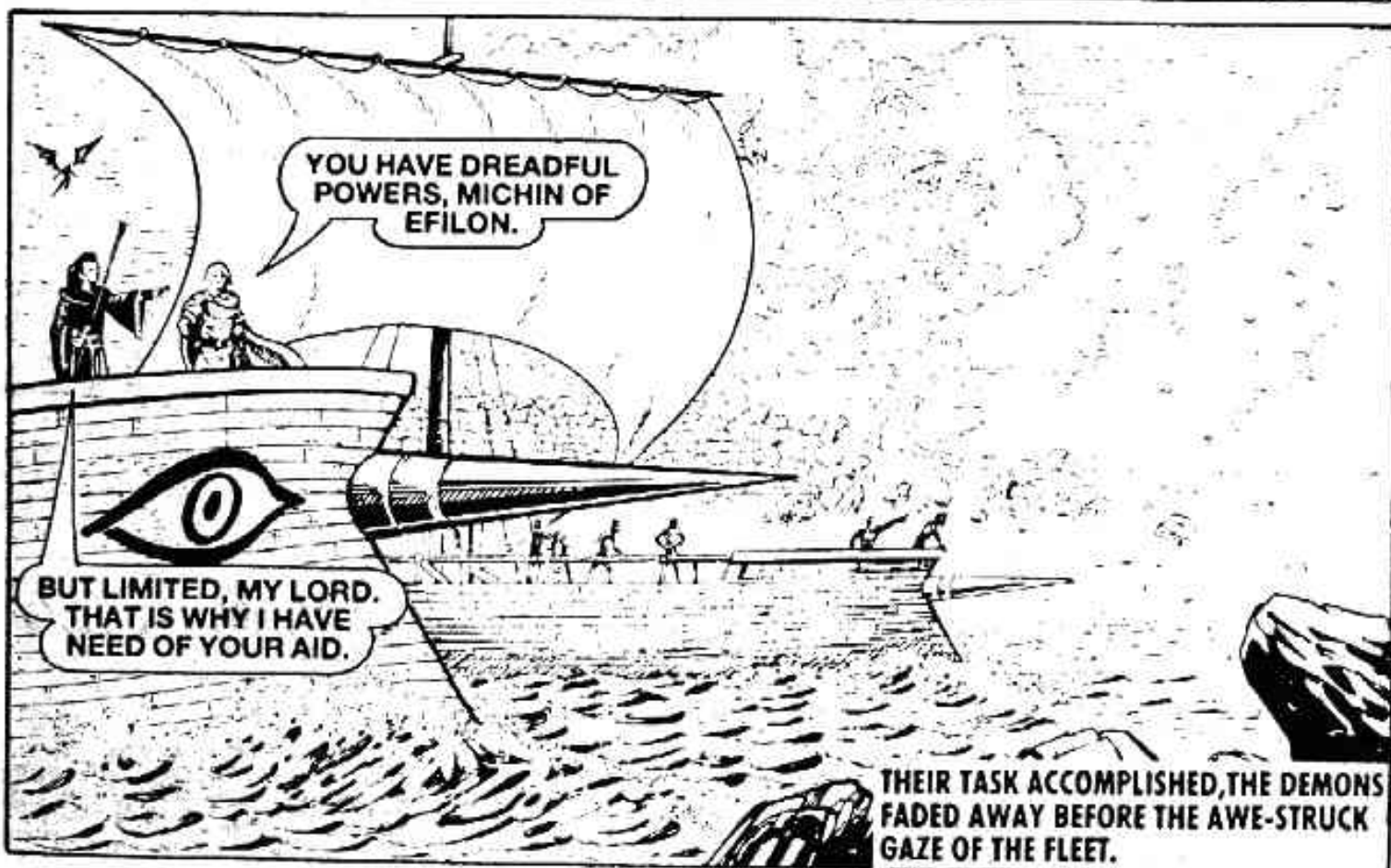


RAISING STAFF AND HAND, MICHIN SUMMONED POWER...

... AND THEN UNLEASHED A TRANSMUTING BLAST AT THE ROCKY BARRIER.



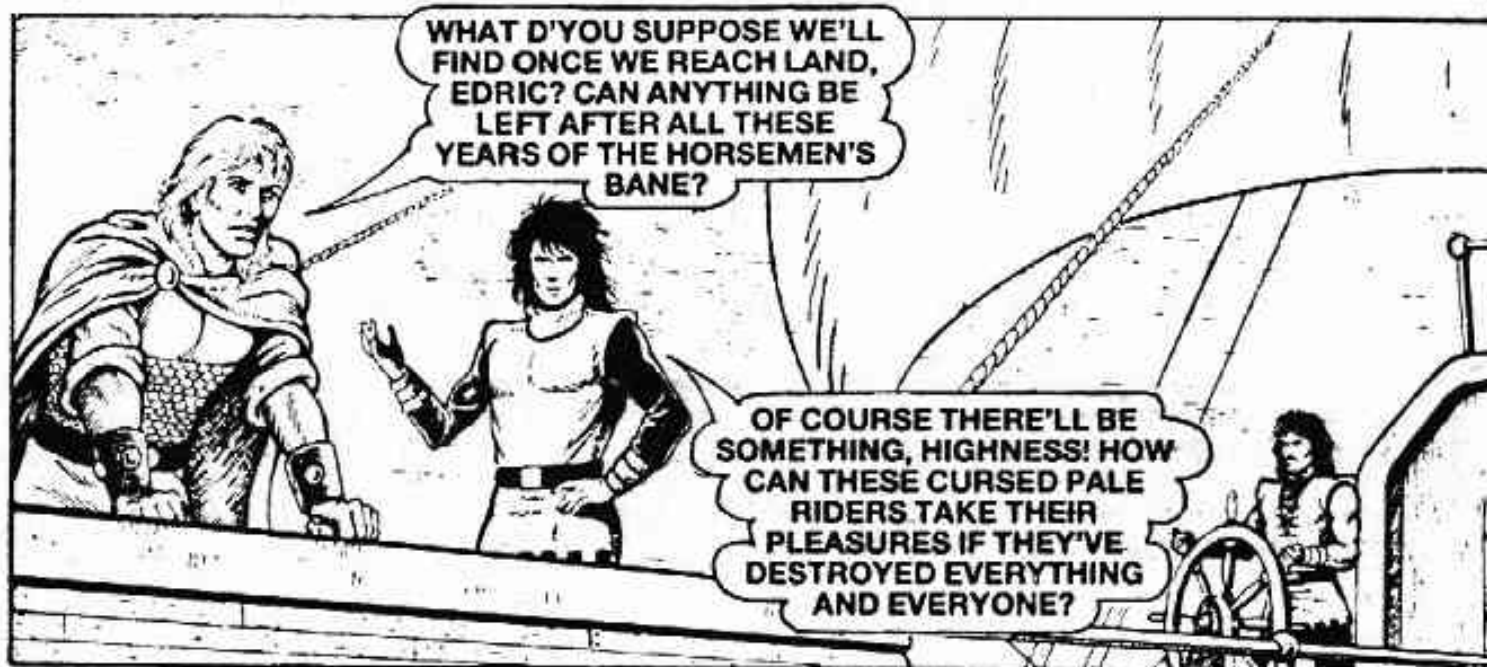
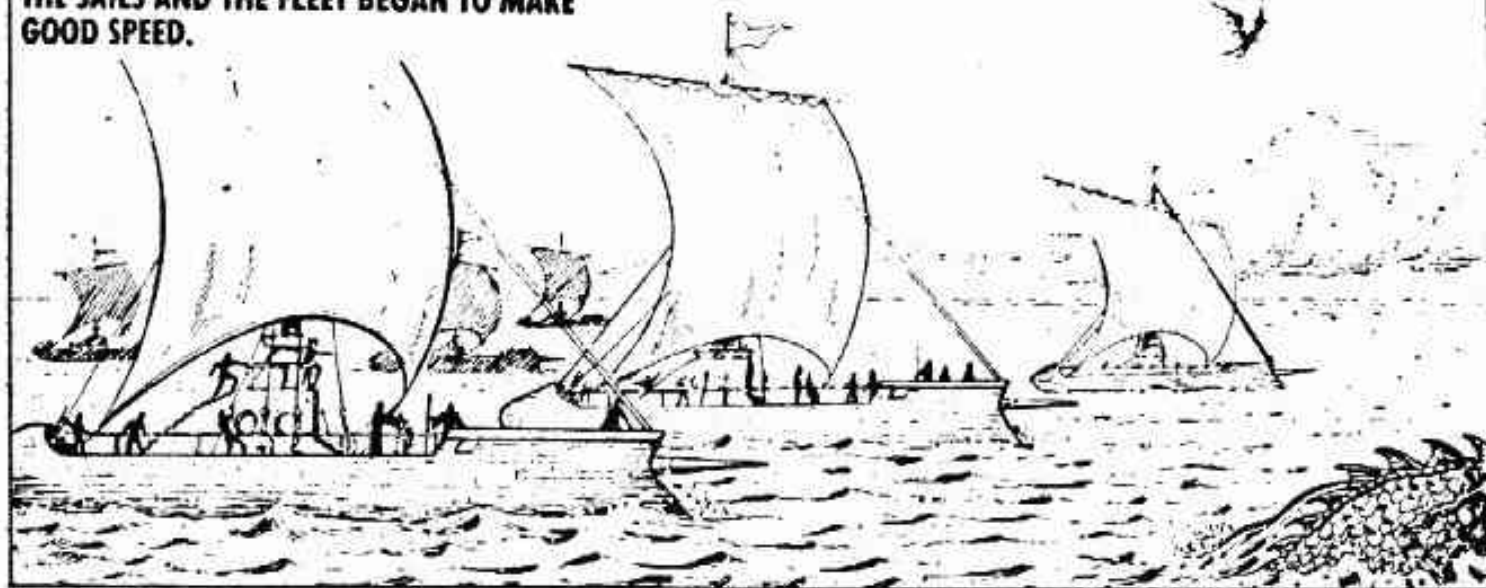
THE DEMONS ATTACKED THE DEBRIS WITH
AWESOME FURY, DEMOLISHING IT IN
SECONDS.




THEIR TASK ACCOMPLISHED, THE DEMONS
FADED AWAY BEFORE THE AWE-STRUCK
GAZE OF THE FLEET.




ONCE IN OPEN WATER, A STIFF BREEZE FILLED THE SAILS AND THE FLEET BEGAN TO MAKE GOOD SPEED.





I'LL TELL YOU EXACTLY WHAT YOU'LL FIND, MY LORDS — A WORLD GONE MAD! YOU'LL SEE BAKING DESERTS NEXT TO VAST ICE-PLAINS, JUNGLES SPROUTING ATOP TALL MOUNTAINS, OCEANS IN THE SKY, AND FISH THAT WALK.

YOU APPEAR WELL-VERSED IN THE TRAGEDY, MICHIN.

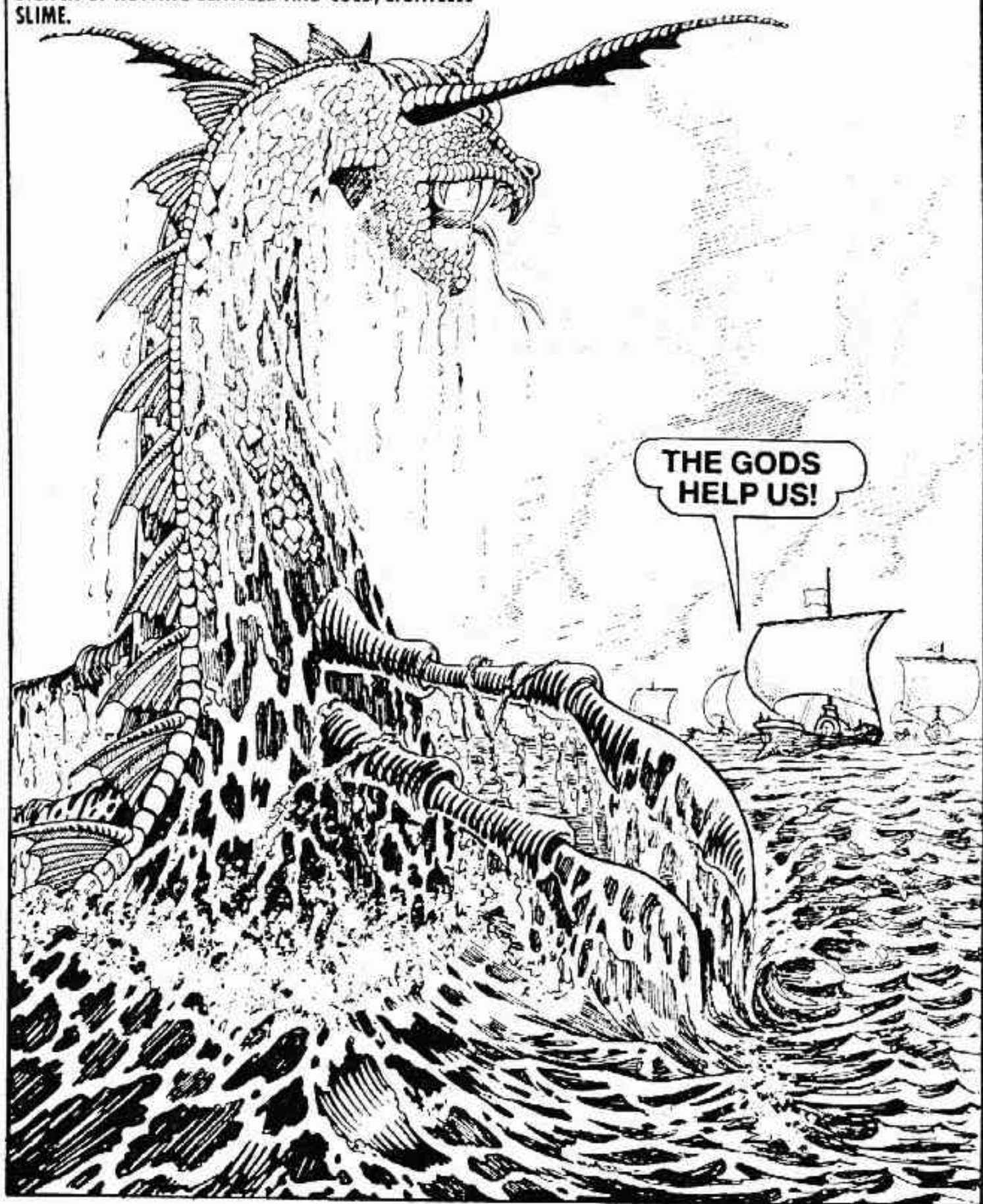



BECAUSE I HAVE WALKED THE EARTH, EDRIC. I HAVE SEEN FOR MYSELF HOW THE VERY WORLD HAS BECOME INFECTED WITH PLAGUE'S INSANITIES, AND THE CREATURES THAT DWELL IN THEM...

'WARE ATTACK!

THE LOOKOUT'S CRY CUT THE MAGICIAN SHORT.


SOMETHING FROM THE WORST NIGHTMARES ROSE FROM THE DEPTHS, SWAMPING THE FLEET IN THE CHOKING STENCH OF ROTTING SEAWEED AND COLD, LIGHTLESS SLIME.



A black and white comic panel showing three characters on the deck of a ship. In the center, a man with a halo around his head, wearing a dark robe, is shouting with his hand raised. To his left, a woman with long hair and a sword on her back looks on with a concerned expression. To his right, another woman is partially visible, also looking towards the man. In the background, a large, dark, winged creature is flying in the sky.

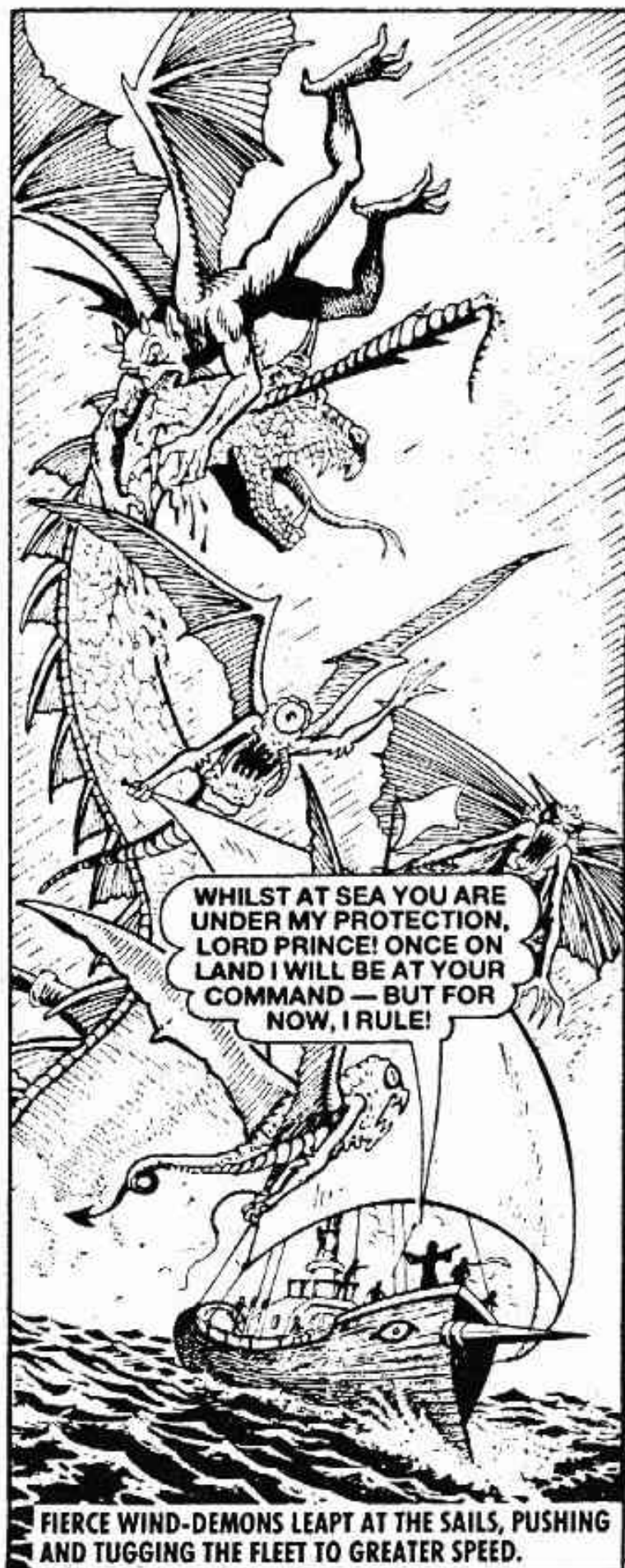
SO MUCH FOR TAIPO'S
WARNING! HOW CAN WE
FIGHT THAT?

SHEATH YOUR SWORDS,
GENTLEMEN — THEY ARE
USELESS. TAIPO! TIME FOR
YOUR ASSISTANCE, I THINK.

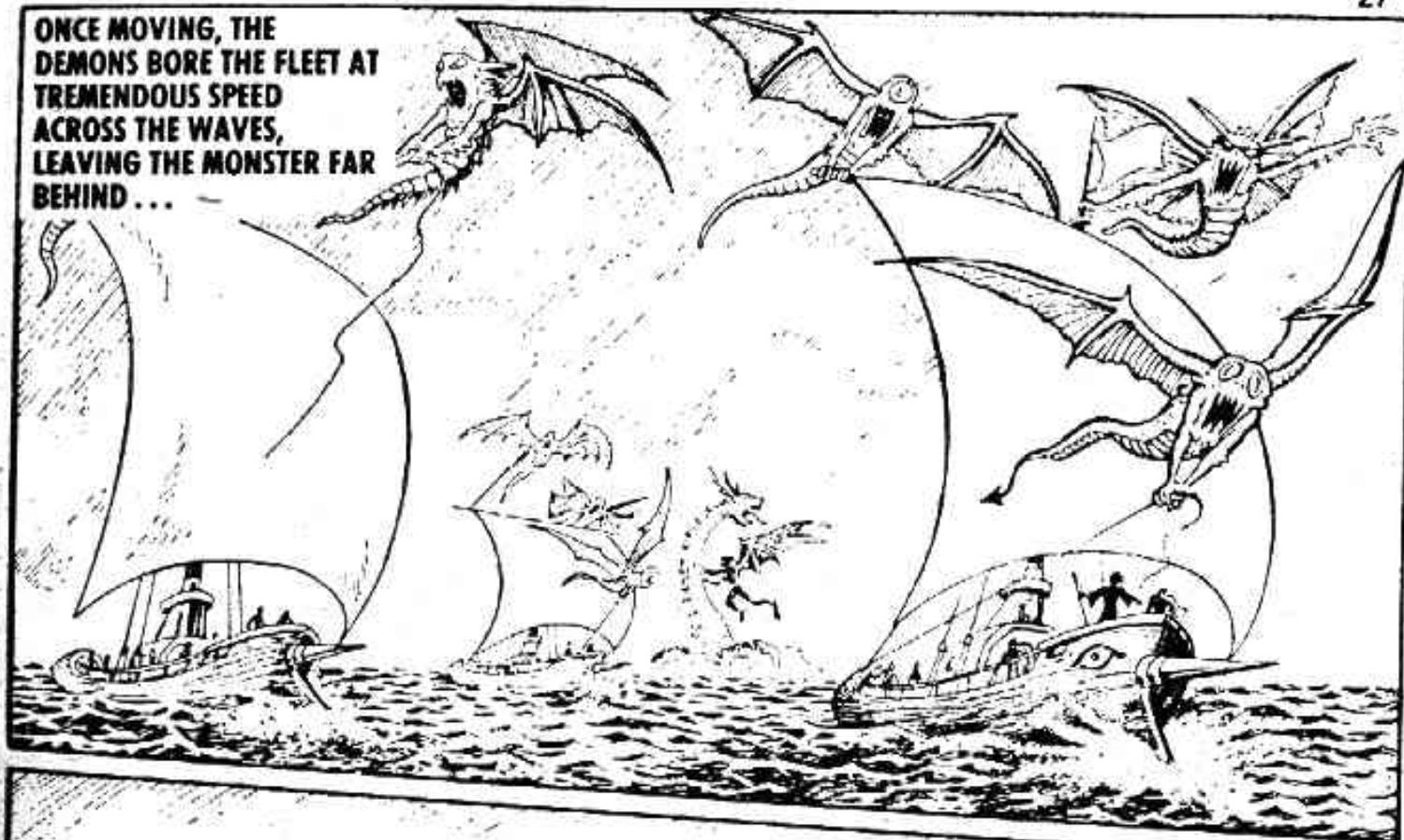
A large black and white comic panel depicting a sea monster, a dragon-like creature with a long, segmented body and a large, open mouth, emerging from the water. A winged creature, similar to the one in the first panel, is perched on the monster's back. The sea is turbulent with waves. In the distance, a small sailing ship is visible on the horizon.

HURLING ITSELF AT THE SEA
MONSTER, TAIPO'S SIZE
SUDDENLY EXPANDED TO
MATCH THE OTHER'S VAST
BULK.

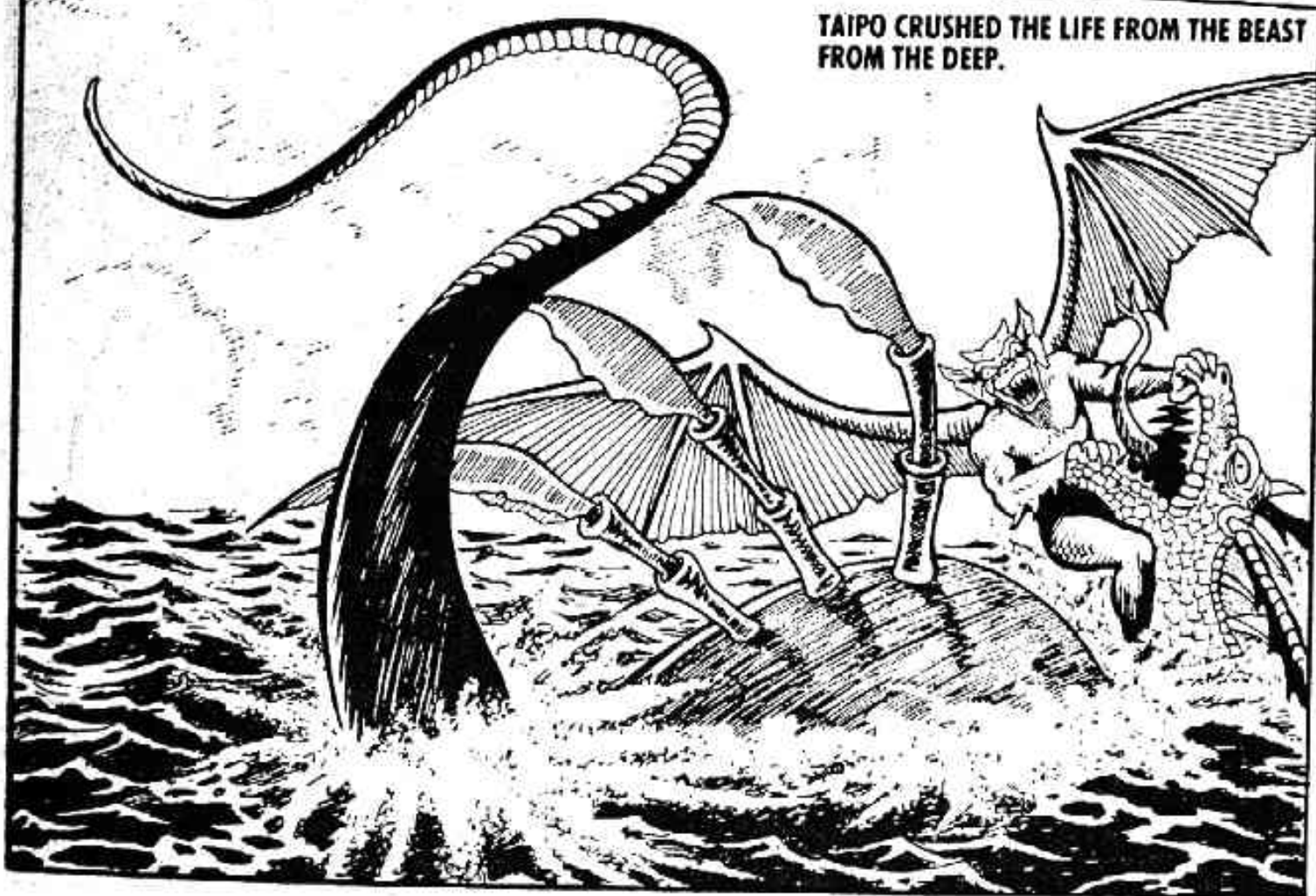
AS YOU SEE, MY
FAMILIAR HAS MANY
TALENTS.



ONCE MOVING, THE
DEMONS BORE THE FLEET AT
TREMENDOUS SPEED
ACROSS THE WAVES,
LEAVING THE MONSTER FAR
BEHIND ...



TAIPO CRUSHED THE LIFE FROM THE BEAST
FROM THE DEEP.



THE EFFORT OF THE
SUPERNATURAL STRUGGLE
HAD EXHAUSTED MICHIN.

AH, TAIPO — YOU WERE
SUCCESSFUL. WELCOME
BACK, LITTLE FRIEND. NOW
I WILL REST ...



BUT SELIN WAS LESS THAN HAPPY.

CURSE THAT MAGICIAN! HOW CAN
HE SIMPLY GO TO SLEEP WHEN
THAT THING'S COUSINS MAY BE
LURKING ANYWHERE?

CALM YOURSELF,
HIGHNESS. WE HAVE NO
MORE FEAR OF SEA
MONSTERS.



WE ARE HERE!

ALREADY? BUT WE'VE BEEN
SAILING ONLY A FEW
HOURS!

THE MAINLAND STRETCHED BEFORE THEM
UNDER AN OMINOUS, BOILING SKY.
UNFAMILIAR BIRDS SAILED ALONG THE
COASTLINE, CRYING OUT MOURNFULLY.



THE SHALLOW-DRAFTED SHIPS WERE ABLE TO DRIVE STRAIGHT ON TO THE DARK BEACH, WHERE DISEMBARKING BEGAN.



NOTHING TO BE SEEN FOR MILES, EDRIC. I SUPPOSE THAT MEANS WE WALK.

UNLESS OUR TAME MAGICIAN CAN PRODUCE MOUNTS OUT OF SAND AND SEAWATER.



A NOVEL THOUGHT, EDRIC, HOWEVER, RIDES FOR US ALL WILL BE ALONG SHORTLY, I ASSURE YOU.

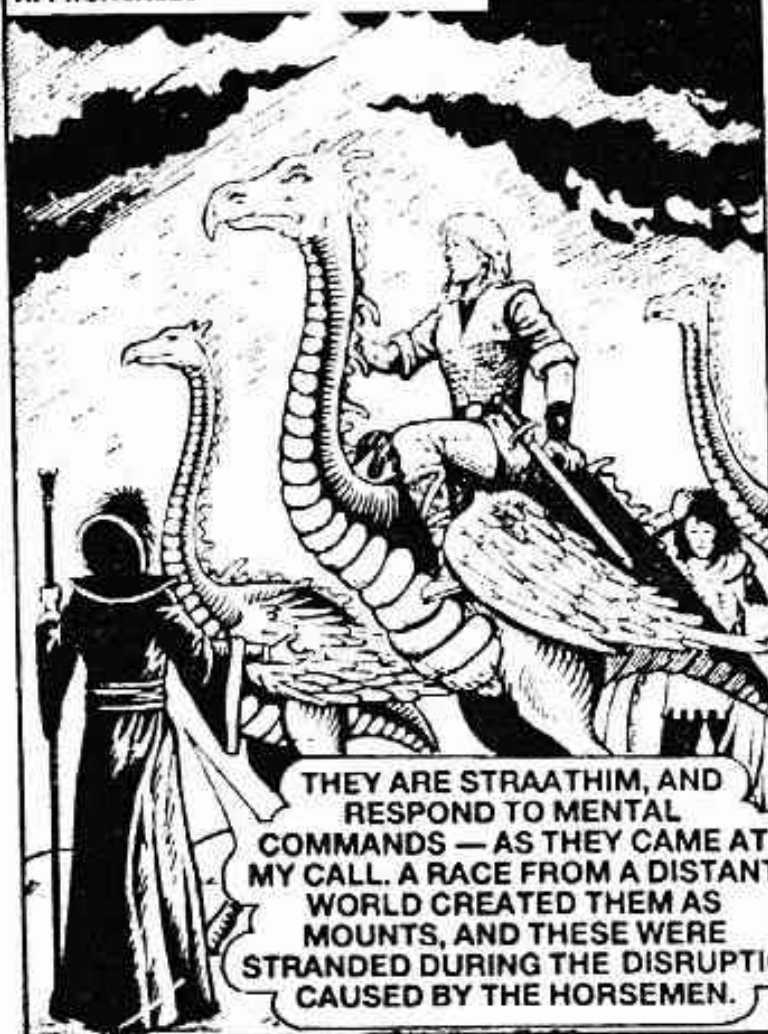
SOME MORE OF YOUR DEMONIC ALLIES, NO DOUBT?



NOT AT ALL, MY LORD. THE MOUNTS I PROPOSE ARE PERFECTLY NATURAL — TO THIS WARPED REGION, ANYWAY.

A FLOCK OF UGLY BIRDS CIRCLED DOWN OUT OF THE SKY...

THE UNGAINLY BIRDS LANDED AND STOOD CALMLY AS THE MEN APPROACHED.



THEY ARE STRAATHIM, AND RESPOND TO MENTAL COMMANDS — AS THEY CAME AT MY CALL. A RACE FROM A DISTANT WORLD CREATED THEM AS MOUNTS, AND THESE WERE STRANDED DURING THE DISRUPTION CAUSED BY THE HORSEMEN.

THE STRAATHIM ARE BARELY ABLE TO LIFT THEIR OWN WEIGHT. A RIDER KEEPS THEM FIRMLY GROUNDED.



ONCE EVERYONE WAS MOUNTED, SELIN LED HIS MEN INTO THE BLACK DESERT.

WHAT IS THIS PLACE, MICHIN? I FEEL AS THOUGH I SHOULD KNOW IT.



THIS WAS THE PLAIN OF QA'ANAS, LORD PRINCE. THE MINIONS OF PERESTILENCE REDUCED ALL THE CROPS THAT GREW HERE TO MERE ASH.

YOU MEAN THIS GREY ASH
AT OUR FEET IS ALL THAT'S
LEFT OF COUNTLESS
ACRES OF FOOD?

AND UNLESS I AM
WRONG, THE AGENCY
OF THAT DESTRUCTION
IS STILL HERE.



IN SECONDS, THE RIDERS WERE ENVELOPED IN A
BITING, STINGING CLOUD.

DO SOMETHING, MICHIN!
CALL UP YOUR DEMONS!

I FEAR THEY WOULD BE
LITTLE HELP AGAINST
THESE THINGS.
BESIDES — THESE ARE
MERELY PLANT-EATING
INSECTS, NO MORE
DEADLY THAN A WASP!



MAYBE SO! BUT THEIR
BITES AND STINGS ARE
SORE!

AND EVEN WASPS, IN
GREAT ENOUGH NUMBERS,
CAN PROVE FATAL!



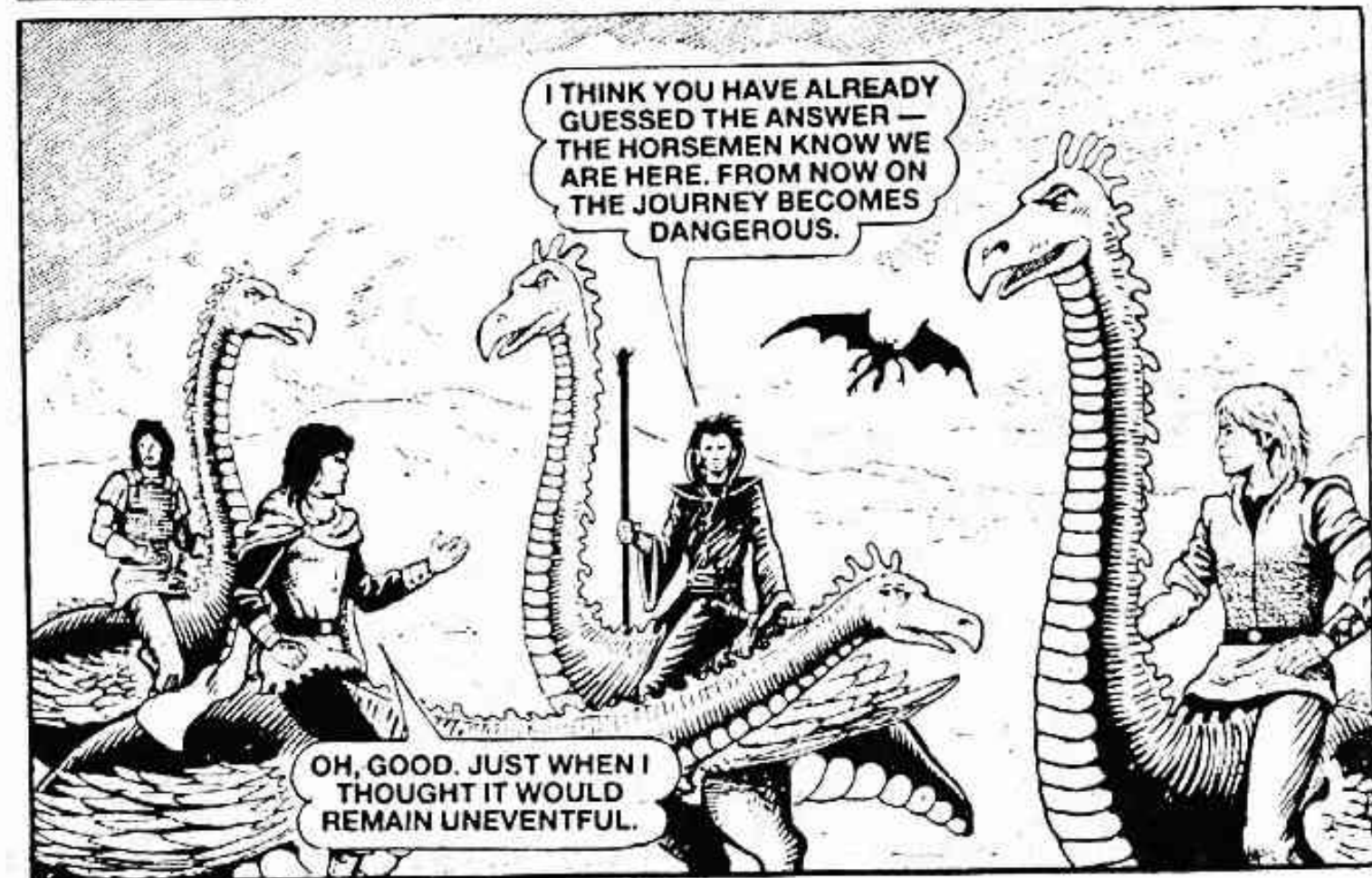
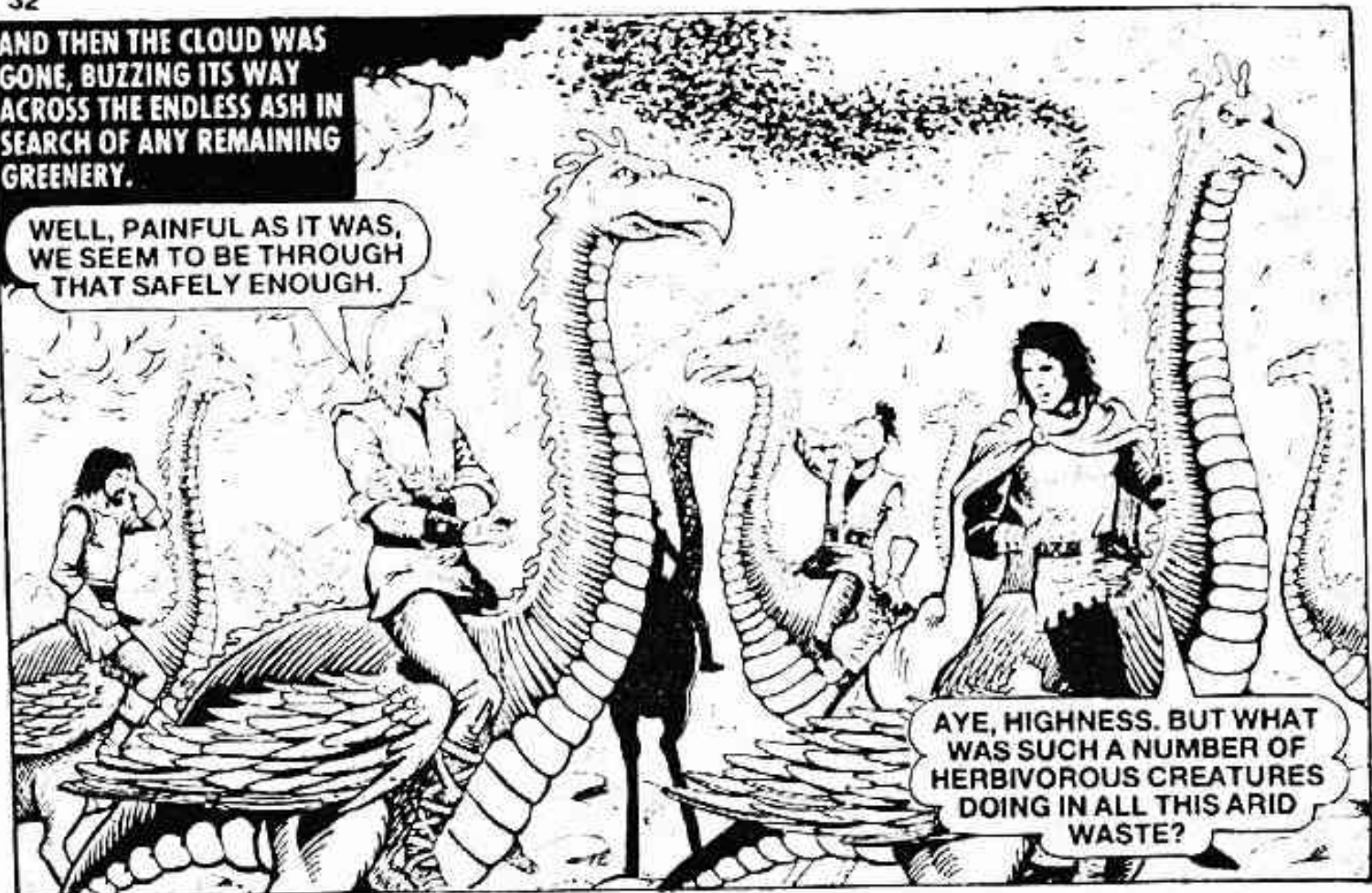
AND THEN THE CLOUD WAS GONE, BUZZING ITS WAY ACROSS THE ENDLESS ASH IN SEARCH OF ANY REMAINING GREENERY.

WELL, PAINFUL AS IT WAS, WE SEEM TO BE THROUGH THAT SAFELY ENOUGH.

AYE, HIGHNESS. BUT WHAT WAS SUCH A NUMBER OF HERBIVOROUS CREATURES DOING IN ALL THIS ARID WASTE?

I THINK YOU HAVE ALREADY GUESSED THE ANSWER — THE HORSEMEN KNOW WE ARE HERE. FROM NOW ON THE JOURNEY BECOMES DANGEROUS.

OH, GOOD. JUST WHEN I THOUGHT IT WOULD REMAIN UNEVENTFUL.



THE ARMY ONCE AGAIN SET OFF
ACROSS THE DESERT — THEN
THERE CAME A SUDDEN CHANGE.

WHAT'S THAT
AHEAD?

IT SEEMS TO GLITTER AND
SHIFT IN THE HEAVY LIGHT.
A SEA, DO YOU THINK?

IT MAY HAVE BEEN A SEA, BUT
NOW IT WAS A FROZEN
WONDERLAND OF ICE-
SCULPTURE, NO LESS A DESERT
THAN THE ASH WASTES THE ARMY
WAS LEAVING.

EVERYONE HUDDLED
AGAINST THE COLD —

ICE PLAIN NEXT TO ASH
DESERT — IT MAKES NO
SENSE!

I WARNED YOU THE WORLD
HAD TURNED MAD, LORD
PRINCE.

THEY HAD GONE BUT A LITTLE WAY WHEN THEY FOUND THEMSELVES BLOCKED IN A STEEP-SIDED GULLEY OF ICE.

HOLD! I AM COMMANDER ARFLAYN OF THE SOUTHERN ICE! STATE YOUR BUSINESS IN THESE LANDS!

WE SEEK ONLY TO PASS THROUGH, COMMANDER. I AM PRINCE SELIN OF NOVAPOLIS! THESE TWO ARE EDRIC AND MICHIN.

YOU LIE! NOVAPOLIS WAS SWALLOWED BY THE ICE THAT COVERS THE WORLD! AND THAT ONE IS KNOWN TO US, BUT NOT AS MICHIN...! IF ONLY I COULD REMEMBER...

I ASSURE YOU, COMMANDER ARFLAYN, THE ONLY ICE WE HAVE SEEN IS HERE. BACK A FEW LEAGUES IS NOUGHT BUT ASH, AND BEYOND THAT, THE OCEAN.

'TIS THEM! THE HERETICS! DESTROY THEM! SLAY THE HERETICS!

MIGHT I SUGGEST WE GET OUT OF THIS GULLEY, HIGHNESS. IF THERE SHOULD BE AN ATTACK, WE'D BE TRAPPED.

THE COLUMN BURST FROM THE GULLEY, TO BE CONFRONTED WITH A NEW ENEMY.

KILL THEM! HERETICS WHO DENY THE PURITY OF THE ICE!

AT LAST — FOE WITH WHOM WE CAN DEAL IN GOOD HONEST STEEL!



WITH HIS STRAATHIM CUT DOWN, SELIN FOUND HIMSELF FACING ARFLAYN IN PERSON.

YOU ARE THE HERETICS! YOU DENY THE REALITY OF THE ICE! THE HORSEMAN TOLD US!

THE HORSEMAN DECEIVED YOU, ARFLAYN! PLAGUE HAS INFECTED YOU WITH THIS MADNESS!

LESS SURE-FOOTED ON THE ICE, SELIN SLIPPED

NO! YOU LIE!



BUT ARFLAYN
HESITATED JUST TOO
LONG—



I AM SORRY, ARFLAYN. BUT THE
HORSEMEN WOULD MAKE US
ALL WHAT WE ARE NOT!

THE REMAINING SHAGGY WARRIORS FLED.

THANKS FOR ALL YOUR
HELP, MICHIN! OR ARE A
DOZEN DELUDED MEN TOO
MANY FOR YOUR DEMONIC
ALLIES?

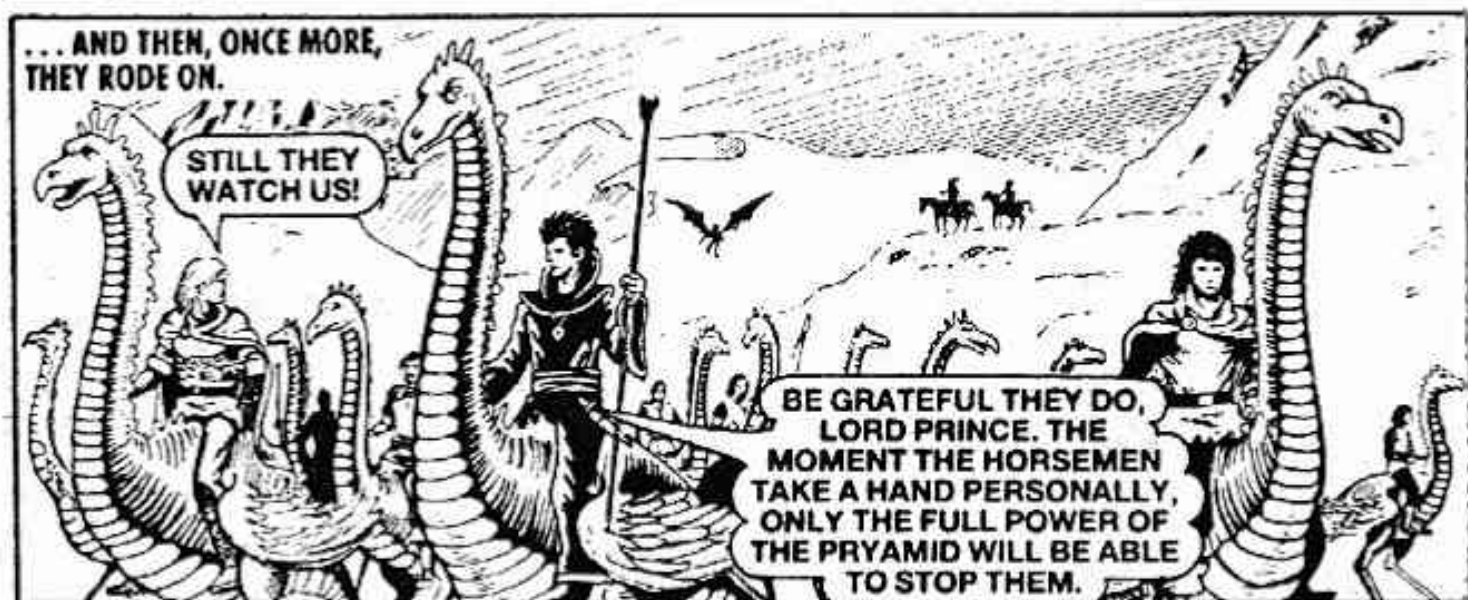
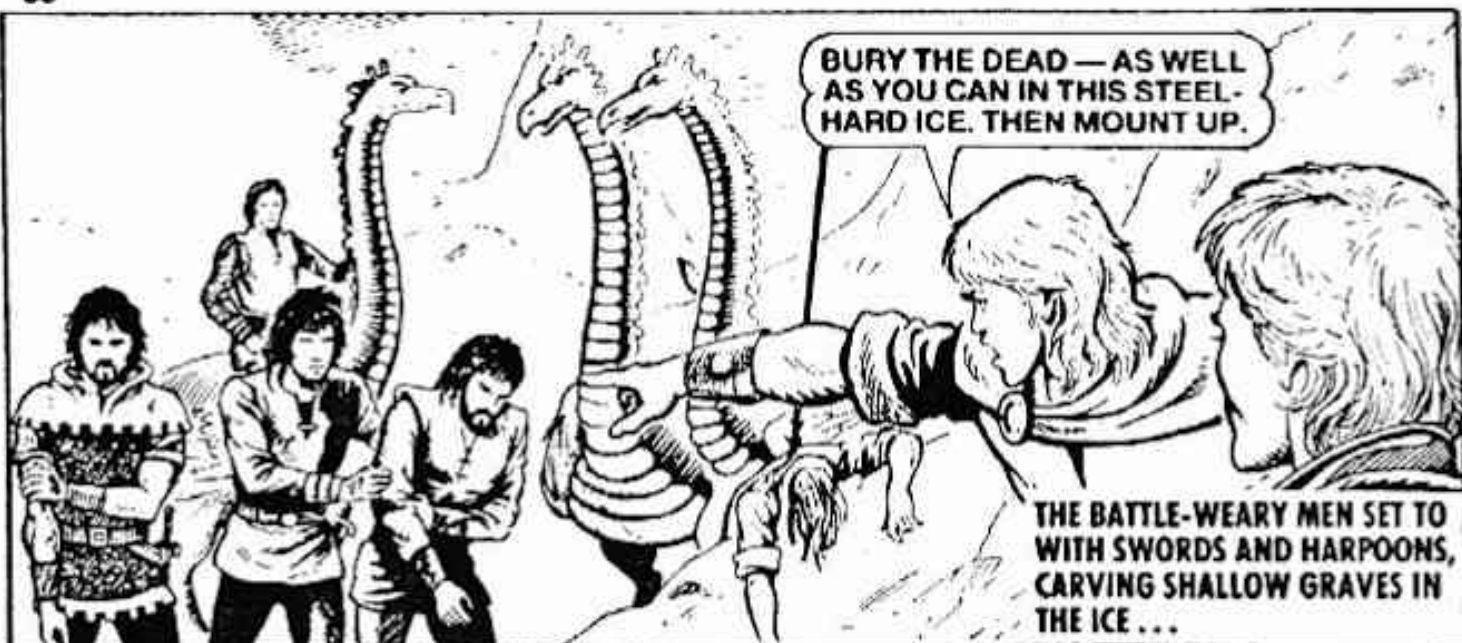
I HAVE TOLD YOU, LORD
PRINCE, I RELY ON YOUR
HELP NOW. I CAN ONLY
ASSIST AGAINST MAGICAL
FOES — LEST I EXHAUST MY
POWERS TOO SOON.

HIGHNESS!
LOOK!



TWO OF
THE HORSEMEN!

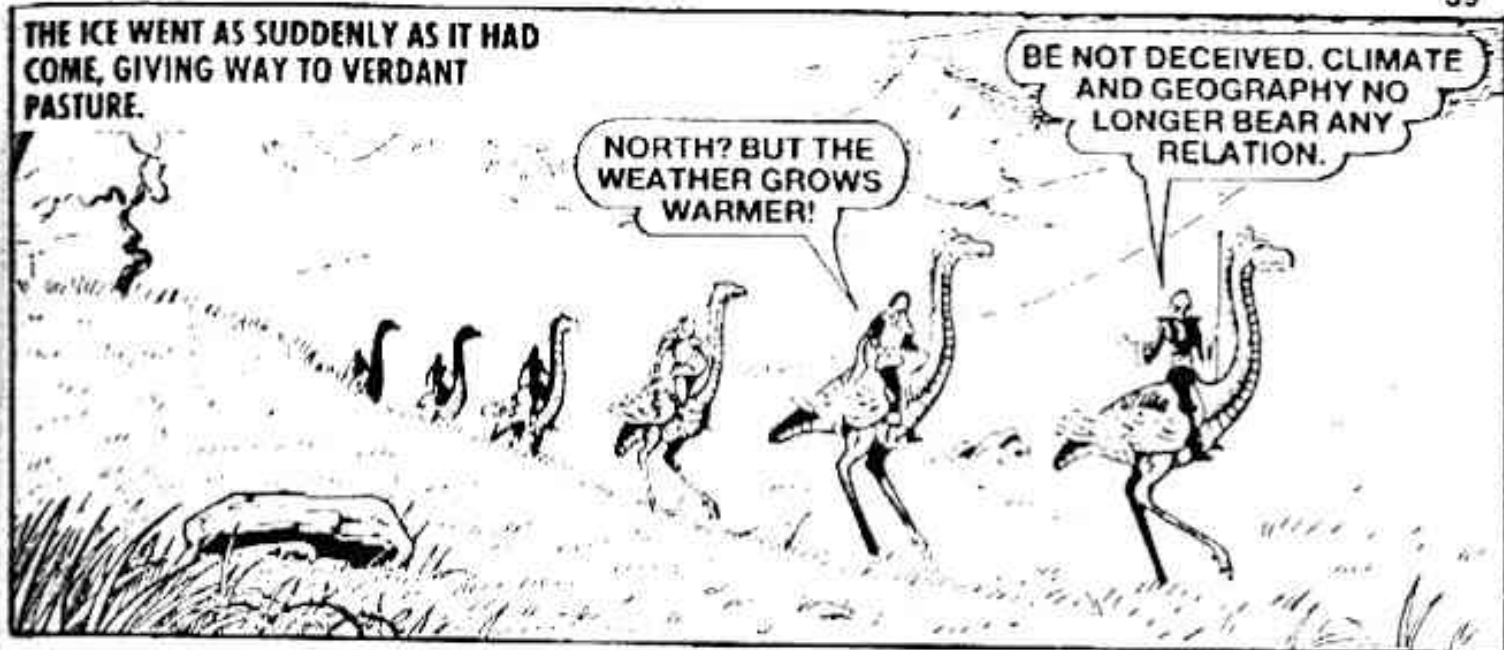
AYE — PLAGUE AND
PESTILENCE. THEY BEGIN
TO CLOSE IN, MY LORD.



THE ICE WENT AS SUDDENLY AS IT HAD COME, GIVING WAY TO VERDANT PASTURE.

NORTH? BUT THE WEATHER GROWS WARMER!

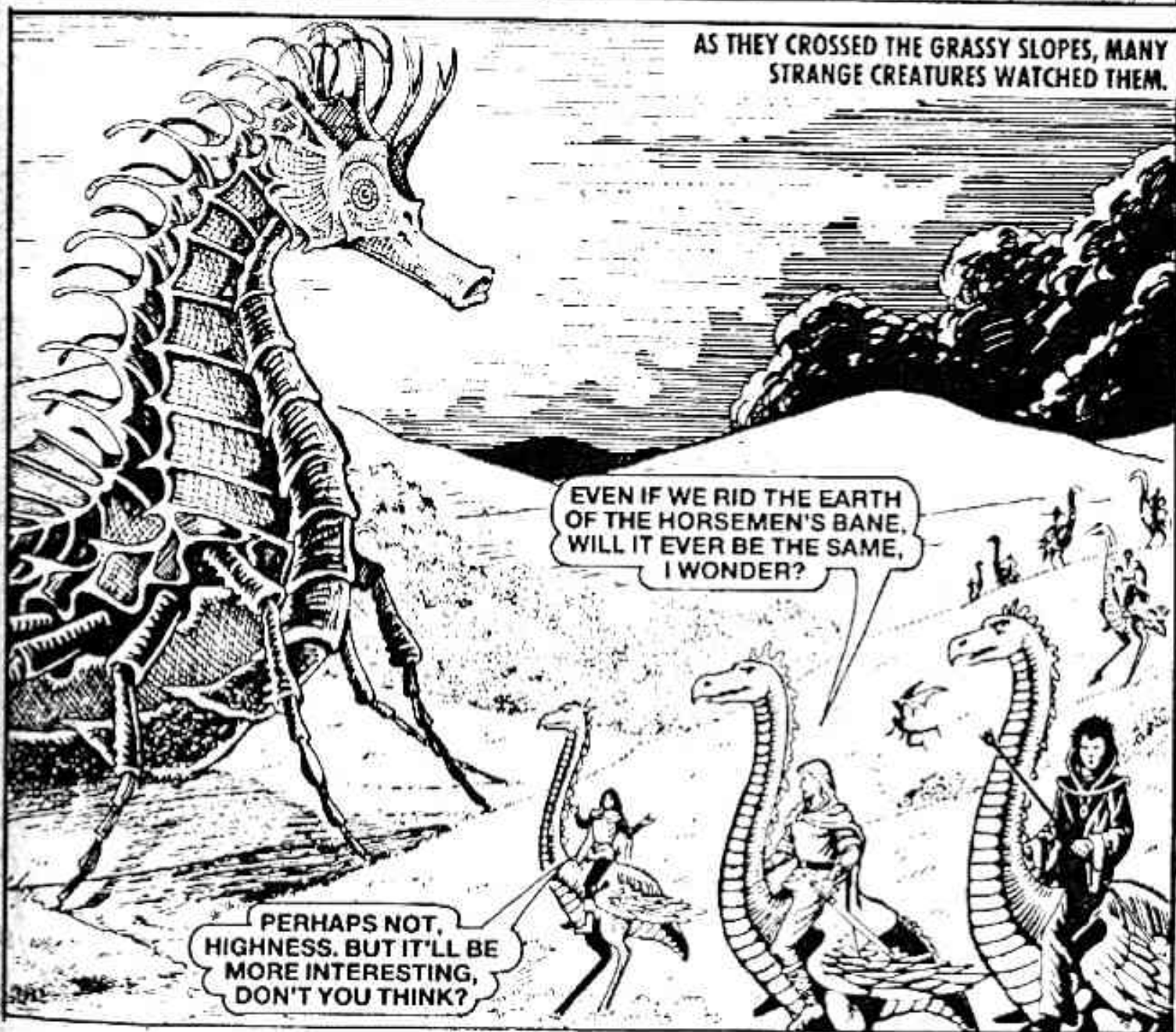
BE NOT DECEIVED. CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY NO LONGER BEAR ANY RELATION.



AS THEY CROSSED THE GRASSY SLOPES, MANY STRANGE CREATURES WATCHED THEM.

EVEN IF WE RID THE EARTH OF THE HORSEMEN'S BANE, WILL IT EVER BE THE SAME, I WONDER?

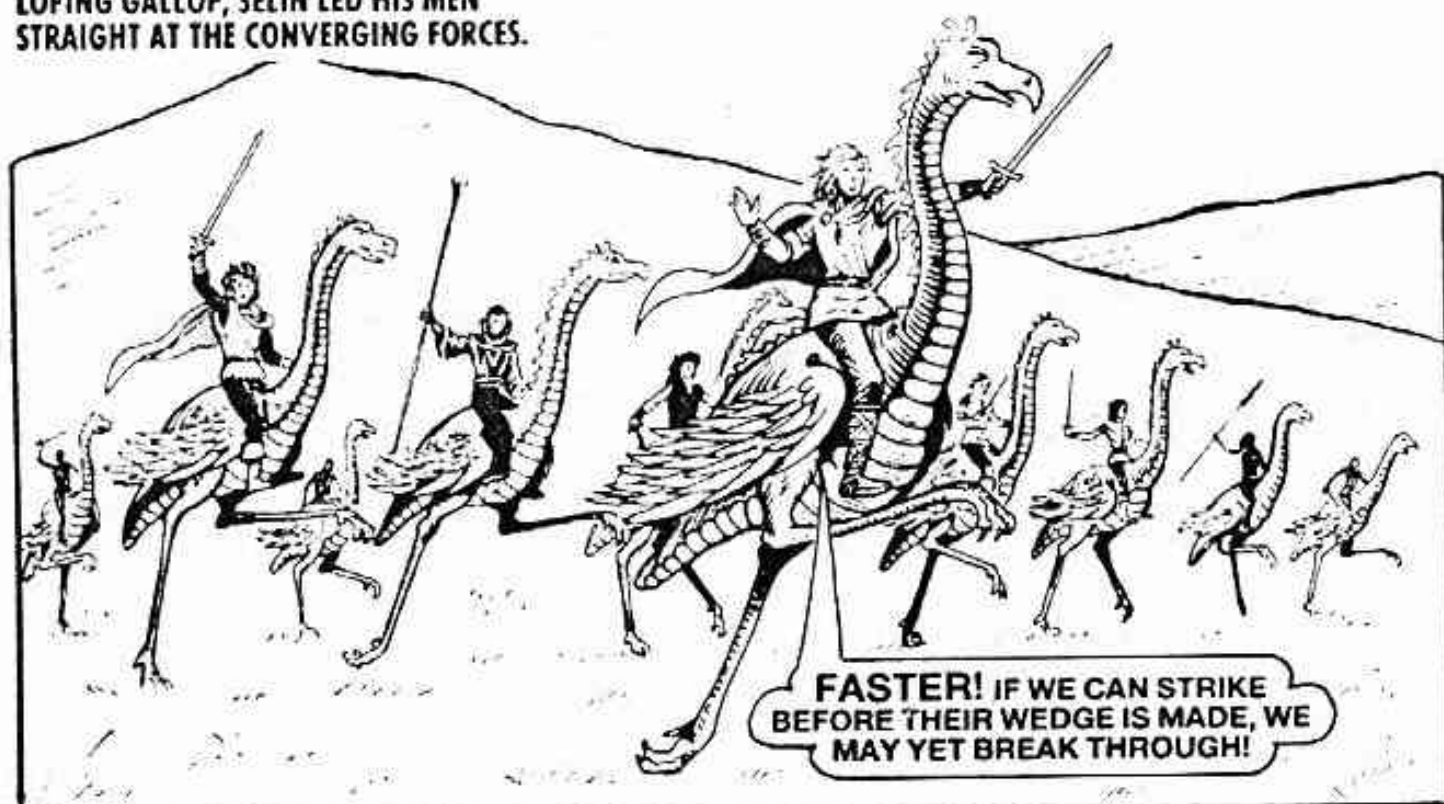
PERHAPS NOT, HIGHNESS. BUT IT'LL BE MORE INTERESTING, DON'T YOU THINK?



AND THEN THE PASTORAL QUIET WAS
BROKEN BY THE THUNDER OF HOOVES.



FORCING THEIR STRAATHIM INTO A
LOPING GALLOP, SELIN LED HIS MEN
STRAIGHT AT THE CONVERGING FORCES.



**FASTER AND MORE MANOEUVRABLE
THAN THE HEAVY KNIGHTS, SELIN'S
MEN FORCED THEIR WAY
THROUGH...**



... AND THEN THEY BROKE FREE!

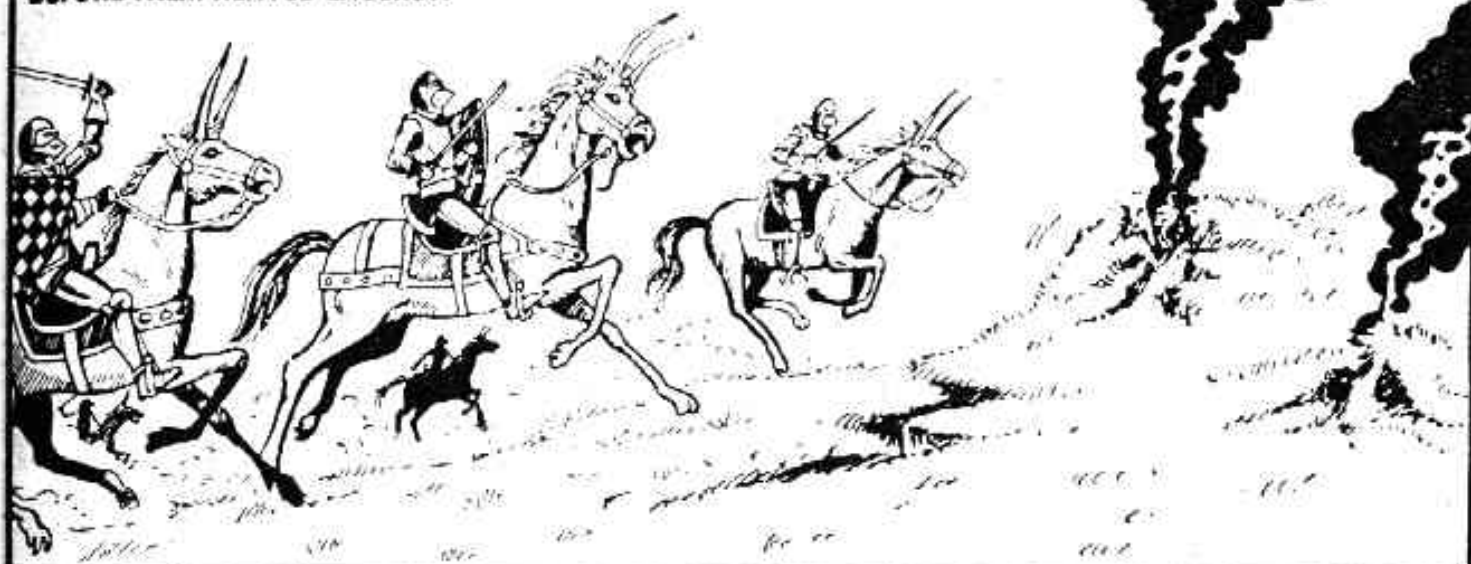
NOW, MICHINI! CALL UP
YOUR DEMONS OR YOU'LL
NEVER SEE YOUR PYRAMID.

AS YOU SAY,
LORD PRINCE.

NOW LET US SEE HOW
THE BEASTS OF WAR
FARE AGAINST MY
MAGIC!

RAYS OF LIGHT POURED FROM THE MAGICIAN'S
STAFF, SOAKING INTO THE GROUND.

MOMENTS LATER, THE KNIGHTS WERE CHARGING AFTER SELIN'S SMALL TROOP — OBVIOUS OF THE WAY THE EARTH BEFORE THEM HEAVED EAGERLY.



AS THE FIRST RIDERS REACHED THE HEAVING GROUND, EARTH DEMONS ERUPTED FROM IT, ATTACKING THE KNIGHTS' MOUNTS—





WITHIN MINUTES IT WAS OVER, THE
DEMONIC HORSES POWERLESS
AGAINST THE GREATER NUMBER OF
THE SWARMING EARTHSPAWN.



BUT UNLIKE MICHIN'S EARLIER SUMMONINGS, THESE DID NOT FADE AWAY IMMEDIATELY —



NOT AT ALL, MY LORD. THE EARTHSPAWN DEMAND A PRICE.

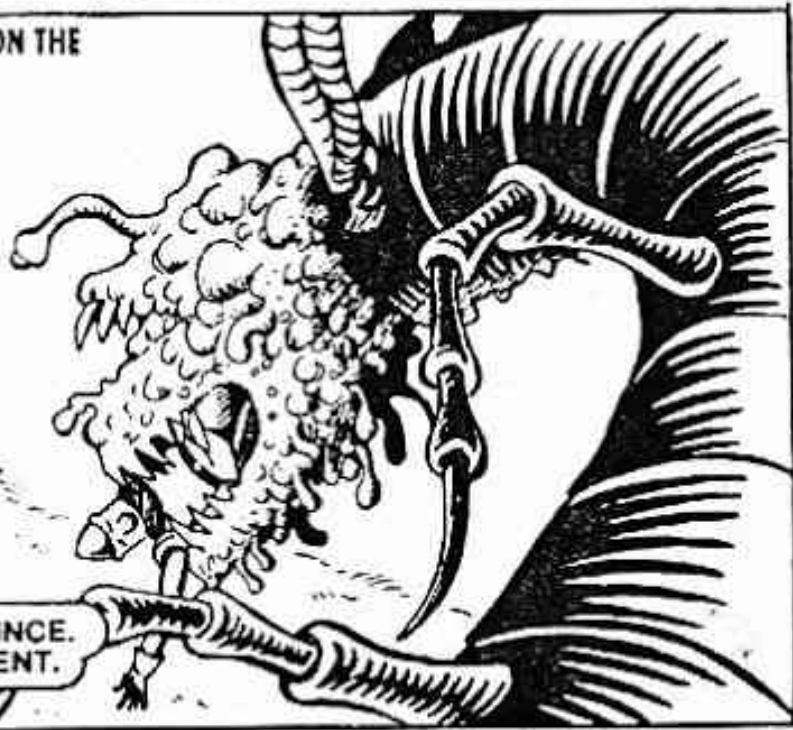


BE CALM, MY LORD — IT IS NOTHING YOU NEED CONCERN YOURSELF OVER. FEED WELL, MY FRIENDS!

AT MICHIN'S WORDS, THE EARTHSPAWN TURNED ON THE MOUNTLESS KNIGHTS, AND BEGAN TO FEED ...



I CANNOT, LORD PRINCE. THAT IS THE PAYMENT.



ONCE THEY HAD EATEN THEIR FILL,
THE EARTHSPAWN WRIGGLED
BACK INTO THE HOLES THROUGH
WHICH THEY HAD COME.



YOU DEFILE US ALL, MICHIN. I
BEGIN TO WONDER IF OUR QUEST IS
WORTH ALL IT HAS COST SO FAR.

YOU DISAPPOINT ME, PRINCE
SELIN. HOW CAN YOU WEIGH THE
LIVES OF A FEW WRETCHED MEN
AGAINST THE FUTURE OF YOUR
WORLD?





THE CHASE PETERED OUT IN
A DRIPPING RAIN FOREST —

FORGIVE ME, EDRIC. BUT THE FATE
THOSE KNIGHTS RECEIVED WAS
NOT ONE I WOULD WISH ON MY
WORST ENEMY.

I UNDERSTAND, HIGHNESS. BUT WE
ARE TAKING ON A WORLD THAT NO
LONGER ACKNOWLEDGES OUR
TERMS. WE MUST BECOME AS
BRUTAL AS IT.



BRUTAL? AYE, PERHAPS.
BUT I'LL NEVER LEARN TO
RELISH IT LIKE OUR MAGIC-
WIELDING FRIEND BACK
THERE.



A DISTANT SOUND CAME FAINTLY
THROUGH THE JUNGLE NOISES—

DO YOU HEAR THAT,
EDRIC? A DISTANT BAYING?

AYE, HIGHNESS. AND THE
EERIE BLAST OF A HORN
TOO, METHOUGHT.



IT IS AS I FEARED. THOSE ARE THE
WERE-HOUNDS — SAVAGE
BEASTS' PERSONAL HUNTING
PACK. THE HORSEMEN HAVE
TIRED OF WATCHING, AND JOINED
THE CHASE IN PERSON.



FOR THE FIRST TIME, MICHIN'S VOICE
WAS TOUCHED WITH UNCERTAINTY.

CRASHING THROUGH THE JUNGLE, HEEDLESS OF ANYTHING IN THEIR PATH, THE WERE-HOUNDS LED THE FOUR HORSEMEN ON A DEADLY HUNT.



QUICKLY! THE PYRAMID IS NOT FAR FROM HERE... I THINK!



WITH AN UNNATURAL SUDDENNESS, THE JUNGLE ENDED—

THE PYRAMID OF POWER!



THE FIRST WERE-HOUNDS
REACHED THE TROOP, AND THE
BATTLE BEGAN IN EARNEST.



AT THE FOOT OF THE
PYRAMID ...

WHATEVER YOU
INTEND, MICHIN
OF EFILON, DO IT
NOW! WE'LL
HOLD THEM OFF!

YOUR COURAGE DOES
YOU CREDIT, LORD
PRINCE.



I WILL LEAVE THESE
FOOLS TO THEIR
DEATHS! MY MOMENT
OF TRIUMPH IS AT
HAND!



BELOW, SELIN'S MEN FOUGHT VALIANTLY —

THIS IS WHERE IT ENDS,
EDRIC — FOR GOOD OR
BAD.

AYE, HIGHNESS. IT'S
BEEN AN EVENTFUL
LIFE — THOUGH
POSSIBLY A
FORESHORTENED ONE!

IN A MOMENT MY
DREAMS WILL FINALLY
BE REALISED!

SUDDENLY A GREAT HORN BLASTED
ACROSS THE PLAIN, SHOCKING
EVERYTHING INTO SILENCE, AND
CAUSING THE HOUNDS TO SLINK BACK.

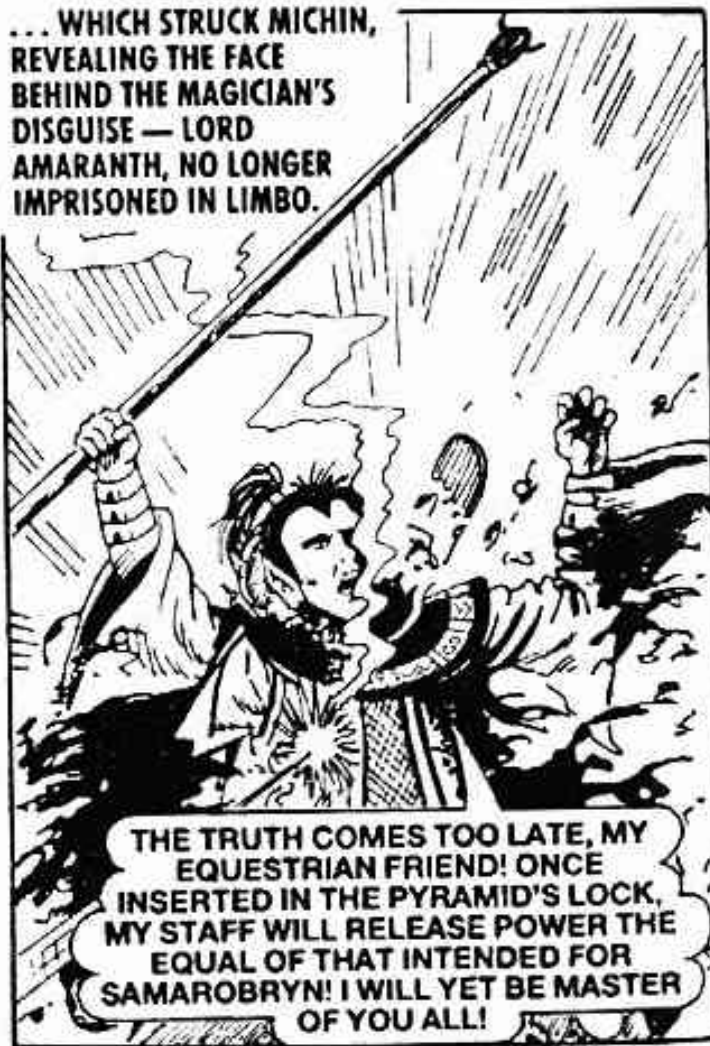
WHAT?


THE HORSEMEN CALL
OFF THEIR CURS!

WAR'S COLD, INHUMAN VOICE RANG OUT ACROSS THE CRYSTAL PLAIN.



... WHICH STRUCK MICHIN, REVEALING THE FACE BEHIND THE MAGICIAN'S DISGUISE — LORD AMARANTH, NO LONGER IMPRISONED IN LIMBO.





I WAS CAST INTO LIMBO WITH THE CORONET STILL IN MY HAND. IT WAS CHARGED WITH THE POWER OF THE GODS THEMSELVES, AND THESE POWERS I USED TO HELP ME ESCAPE. WHAT REMAINS OF THE CORONET TIPS MY STAFF, ENOUGH TO GIVE ME COMMAND OF THIS PYRAMID.

THRUSTING THE STAFF HOME, AMARANTH BEGAN TO SUMMON THE POWER OF THE PYRAMID.



NO!

HIGHNESS! SELIN! YOU CAN'T STOP HIM!

YOU CAUSED THE WASTELAND THAT IS NOW MY WORLD! YOU AND YOUR GREED!

AND NOW I SHALL RECTIFY THAT, PRINCE SELIN — ON MY OWN TERMS! STAY BACK — LEST MY NEW-FOUND POWERS ROAST YOU LIKE A PIG!

SELIN TRIED TO SEIZE THE STAFF ...

MORTAL FOOL!

AND IN A DAZZLING BLAZE, BOTH MAN AND
DEMI-GOD WERE BLASTED FROM SIGHT!

HIGHNESS? SELIN?

THE PRINCE FOUND HIMSELF IN A COLOURLESS VOID, SURROUNDED BY BITTERLY COLD MIST, AND AMARANTH LOOMING WRATHFULLY ABOVE HIM.

WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

SO YOU LIVE STILL? WELL, MY MEDDLESOME PRINCE, YOU'LL BE GLAD TO KNOW THAT YOUR INTERFERENCE HAS THROWN US BOTH BACK INTO LIMBO. FOR MYSELF, THAT IS NO PROBLEM — BUT FOR YOU ...

SELIN SNATCHED AMARANTH'S STAFF AWAY FROM HIM.

YOU'LL REMAIN IN LIMBO, EVEN IF I HAVE TO WATCH OVER YOU FOR ETERNITY! I HAVE THE STAFF!

TAIPO!

AS TAIPO MOVED, HIS BODY SPLIT APART, AND A VAST NEW THING EMERGED.

I REGRET MY ALLIANCE WITH YOU, AMARANTH — YOU ARE WEAK AND UNRELIABLE. BUT NOW I AM BACK IN MY OWN REALM, I MAY TAKE ON MY TRUE FORM — AND GUT THIS MORTAL LIKE A FISH!

DID YOU THINK AMARANTH FLED LIMBO USING ONLY HIS OWN FEEBLE POWERS? I HELPED HIM — TAIPO, LORD OF LIMBO — ON THE UNDERSTANDING WE SHARED THE CONQUERED WORLD.

SELIN RETREATED BEFORE TAIPO'S DEADLY CLAWS.



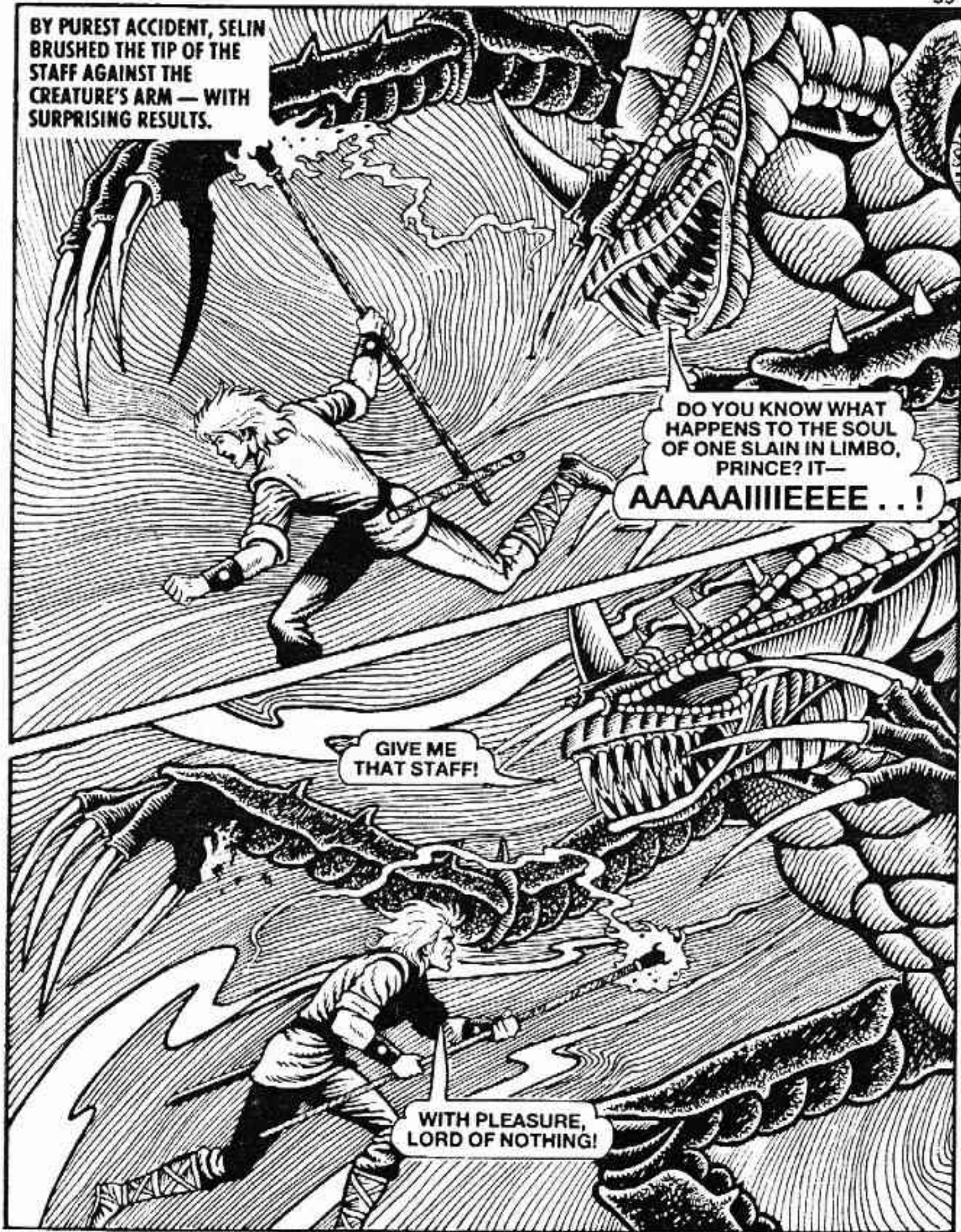
BY PUREST ACCIDENT, SELIN
BRUSHED THE TIP OF THE
STAFF AGAINST THE
CREATURE'S ARM — WITH
SURPRISING RESULTS.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT
HAPPENS TO THE SOUL
OF ONE SLAIN IN LIMBO,
PRINCE? IT—

AAAAAIIIIIEEE...!

GIVE ME
THAT STAFF!

WITH PLEASURE,
LORD OF NOTHING!





... BUT ONLY ONE REACHED IT.

FOR THE WASTED EARTH!
FOR THE BANE OF THE
HORSEMEN! MAY YOU
FIND OUT WHAT IT'S LIKE
TO DIE IN LIMBO!

NOOO ...!

WHATEVER AGONIES BOTH
OF YOU WILL SUFFER FOR
ETERNITY WILL NEVER BE
ENOUGH!



BACK ON EARTH, THE NOVAPOLIS FORCES
HAD SUCCUMBED TO THE FOUR HORSEMEN.

AND NOW THAT THY
PRINCE AND
AMARANTH ARE GONE,
EDRIC, WHAT DOST
THOU PROPOSE WE DO
WITH THEE?

DOES IT MATTER? THE
WORLD IS YOURS NOW!

BUT THEN A VOICE RANG OUT ACROSS THE CRYSTAL PLAIN.

ON THE CONTRARY,
EDRIC! THE
HORSEMEN ARE NO
LONGER RULERS OF
THIS WORLD!

HIGHNESS? IS
THAT REALLY YOU?

RETURNED SAFELY FROM LIMBO, SELIN'S
FIGURE DOMINATED THE SCENE.

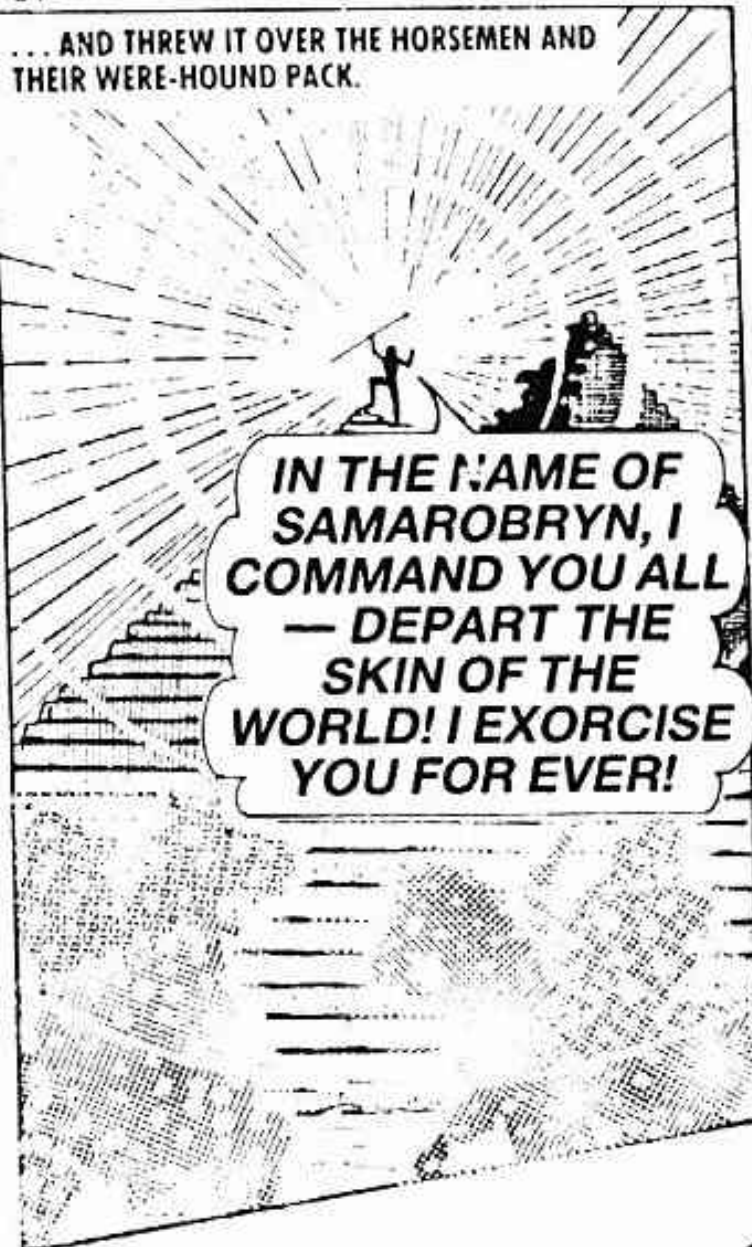
AMARANTH AND HIS
FOUL ALLIES ARE
GONE, HORSEMEN.
SAMAROBRYN'S DEATH
HAS BEEN FULLY
AVENGED. THERE IS NO
NEED FOR YOU TO
REMAIN.

THAT IS NOT THY
DECISION, PRINCE
SELIN. WE ANSWER TO
THE GODS ALONE.

THE GODS HAVE HAD THEIR
BLOOD! THE TIME HAS COME FOR
MANKIND TO TAKE ITS OWN
RESPONSIBILITIES!

SELIN GATHERED ALL THE
POWER OF THE STAFF
AROUND HIM IN A DEADLY
CLOAK...

... AND THREW IT OVER THE HORSEMEN AND THEIR WERE-HOUND PACK.



IN THE NAME OF SAMAROBRYN, I COMMAND YOU ALL — DEPART THE SKIN OF THE WORLD! I EXORCISE YOU FOR EVER!


EXHAUSTED, SELIN COLLAPSED—

HIGHNESS! I HAD NEVER DARED HOPE YOU STILL LIVED!

AYE, STILL. HELP ME DOWN, EDRIC. NOW THE BANE OF THE HORSEMEN HAS BEEN LIFTED, OUR WORLD WILL RETURN TO NORMAL — AND THAT MEANS THIS POLAR REGION WILL SOON BECOME VERY COLD.

BUT THAT STAFF — NOW YOU HAVE ABSOLUTE POWER! YOU CAN BE EVERYTHING THAT LORD SAMAROBRYN WAS TO HAVE BEEN!

NO MAN SHOULD HAVE SUCH POWER, EDRIC! HOW MANY HAVE DIED FOR IT ALREADY?



MANKIND WILL NEVER LIVE
SAFELY WHILST SUCH AS
THIS EXISTS.

FROM THE BACK OF HIS MOUNT,
SELIN RAISED THE STAFF AND CAST IT,
LIKE A JAVELIN, AT THE PYRAMID OF
POWER.

AS THE STAFF STRUCK, ITS
ENERGIES BLAZED FORTH —
AWAKENING THE INERT POWER
WITHIN THE PYRAMID ITSELF. IN
MOMENTS, THE PYRAMID WAS
BURNING WITH THE HEAT OF A
SUN, CONSUMING ITSELF.



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**DON'T
MISS**

**THIS MONTH'S OTHER
ACTION-PACKED
ADVENTURE**



NOW ON SALE

A PLAGUE OF HORSEMEN

Peace and tranquility reigned on Earth. People lived in the most elegant cities, surrounded by grace and beauty. But man's baser nature still thrived, nurtured by intense jealousy, until in one act of sheer barbarism the gods swore revenge. The dark clouds of war descended, followed by the curse of pestilence, pursued by the disaster of famine until, finally, a scourge of savage beasts tainted the land. From this trough of despair one faint ray of hope glowed . . . the mysterious powers of Michin the Mystic, and the stout heart of Prince Selin.

